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LUCK AND LUCK

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F-HAUNTED BOY

HA! HA!

Ha' Ha' Ha'

KEN DAGGETT

"THIS IS A RIOT"

"ROUND AND ROUND"

No 727

MAY 8th 1912

5 Cents.

PLUCK AND LUCK

A HAUNTED BOY OR THE MAD-HOUSE MYSTERY
AND OTHER STORIES

By Allan Arnold



The sick woman in the bed covered her face with her hands to shut out the sight of the struggle. There came a crash as the lock was burst open. In rushed Bill and Hank, two of the keepers.

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PLUCK AND LUCK

Stories of Adventure

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A HAUNTED BOY

OR,

THE MADHOUSE MYSTERY

By ALLAN ARNOLD

CHAPTER I.

THE SCHOOLBOY'S HISTORY.

It was midday on the 10th of May, 18—, when the train from Albany came thundering into the depot at Irvingdale-on-the-Hudson, and a fine, handsome-looking boy alighted.

He was apparently about sixteen years of age, attired in a neat suit of clothing, and carried a small valise and an umbrella. His dark-brown eyes swept a rapid glance around at the surroundings of the pretty, but sleepy-looking depot, and the scattered village beyond, with a curious look of expectancy. The village was charmingly located on the slope that ran down to the placid river's edge, most of the houses being handsome summer residences, and but few stores to be seen. On a rock eminence stood a large, gray stone building, inclosed by a high plank fence, of great circumference, at the northern suburb, while here and there at the middle of Irvingdale arose cupolas, church steeples and high, green foliaged trees and shrubbery.

The boy had hardly taken in this view when he heard a loud noise proceeding from the road in back of the depot, the shout of a man, the scream of a woman, the pounding of horses' hoofs, and the rapid rumble of wagon wheels.

Glancing through the depot windows, he was startled to see a buggy containing a lady and gentleman come rushing down the road, the horse wild and unmanageable from being frightened at the puffing locomotive that just then went roaring

by. The gentleman had lost all control over the beast, and if it plunged along in a direct line, it was evident that horse, man and woman, would go off the end of the dock where the road terminated, and plunge into the river!

As if to make matters worse, the carriage wheels jolting the stone, flung the man out, the reins flashed from his hands, and over the dashboard, fell upon the frightened horse's back, and the helpless woman could only cling to her seat and wait the result.

"Runaway!" muttered the boy, dropping his valise and umbrella. "The beast may kill that lady unless it is checked. I'll try it."

In a flash he darted out in the middle of the road, and as the horse was almost on the point of trampling him down, he sprang up, caught the check-line on either side of its head, and with his legs up around the shaft, out of the way of the hoofs, and hung on.

He brought the horse to a pause—conquered—within a few feet of the dock, released it, and cried out cheerily to the distressed lady.

"Are you are, madam, safe and sound, thank heaven!" the woman wore a crape veil over her face, and instead of smiling, she burst into tears, with the realization that her husband was over.

Then the gentleman approached, brushing the dust off

his clothing, looking all mussed up, and said, in hasty tones:

"Brave boy, by Jove! How can I thank you enough?"

"Oh, I am glad to have been of service, sir," replied the lad.

He was uninjured, and glanced at the gentleman.

Truth to tell, he was unprepossessed by the man's looks, though.

He was about forty years of age, dressed in black, wore a high silk hat, was short, wiry and slender, and had a clean-shaven face.

Rather a professional-looking personage, the boy surmised, and his white necktie would have aroused the belief that he was a minister, were it not for the sinister look of his face.

The lady's features were hidden under her veil, and the boy noticed that she was a middle-sized woman, plainly dressed in black.

Then his gaze returned to the restless look in the roving yellow eyes of the man, as he doffed his hat and showed a head bald on top, with just a fringe of black hair around his cranium.

"You are modest," said the man, bending a sharp look at the boy out of his singular-looking eyes, for they were utterly devoid of lashes and eyebrows, making his big nose look much longer. "My name is Dr. Caleb Crane," he continued, "and I see you are a stranger here. I have charge of the large, private insane asylum up there."

He pointed at the gray stone building upon the bluff, and the boy replied:

"Yes, I am a stranger here, and I am glad to know you, sir."

"Do you intend to remain at Irvingdale?"

"I do. I was born here, sir, but have been absent since I was five years of age. I have just returned from Albany, where I have been at college ever since, for my mother sent for me."

To the boy's surprise, he saw an expression of eager interest appear upon the man's face, and the woman bent suddenly forward in the buggy, as if intensely anxious over something.

"You don't say!" said Dr. Crane. "And your name?"

"My name is Ruric Gruesome."

An exclamation burst involuntarily from the lips of both the man and the woman, increasing the boy's surprise, and he saw them both start convulsively, recoil from him, and then recover.

The physician was the first to speak, having regained his faculties.

"I know your mother," said he, with an effort. "She is a patient of mine, whom I have been attending for a week past."

"Indeed!" said the boy. "I did not know she was ill."

A peculiar glance darted from Dr. Crane's yellow eyes.

He tapped his forehead significantly and replied:

"I feel sorry for you. She is slightly affected here."

"What—crazy?"

"No; but in a singular state from neuralgia. Nothing more. It sometimes gets serious, but she will be herself in a day or two."

"I have not seen her in eleven years," said Ruric, "but in the interval she has frequently written to me and never mentioned sickness."

"Of course not. Why should she, by Jove? Eleven years absent? And I suppose your father is dead, eh?"

"Ah, that is something I do not know, sir. I don't remember ever having seen him. My mother once wrote me, though, that he and she quarreled, parted—he went to sea and she stayed here. He wanted to get possession of me, I believe, and to frustrate that design she sent me away secretly to the school where I have been reared and educated, and there I have remained ever since."

"A queer history, by Jove! So she sent for you at last, eh?"

"Yesterday, sir. Here I am now, and I don't know where she lives."

"Ha! ha! ha! How funny! Can't you find your own home? That's a singular position to be placed in. But I need hardly direct you, for here comes her man-of-all-work with a wagon, no doubt to fetch you home, so I'll bid you good-day, hoping you will call to see me soon, and thanking you again."

He bowed to the boy, got into the buggy without saying a word to the silent woman, and gathering up the reins of the now pacific horse, he darted a strange glance at Ruric and drove away.

The boy fairly shuddered.

That queer glance, those strange eyes, seemed to pierce him through.

"What a singular couple," he muttered. "It makes me think of being fascinated by a boa-constrictor to get in the range of that man's vision. Queer his wife said nothing. And stranger still, how strongly affected they were on hearing my name uttered. I never saw such violent agitation exhibited before."

He walked back to the depot, picked up his valise and umbrella just as the four-wheeled surrey paused near by, and a good-natured-looking man beckoned to him.

"Be you Master Ruric?" was the rustic's query.

"That's my name," replied the boy.

"Tho't so. Step in. Your mother sent me for you. I'm Dan what works for her, you know."

"Is the house far from here?" asked Ruric, taking a seat beside the other.

"Oh, no," was the reply, as Dan drove off. "Just beyond that hill a ways, in the cottage you can see there, amid those trees."

"A pretty place," observed the boy, glancing at the gabled-roofed structure, with its vine-covered walls, and small, gothic windows. "My mother is sick, Dr. Crane just told me?"

"Yes," nodded Dan, with a visible lengthening of his face at mention of the physician's name. "And instid of getting better, since he's been a-doctoring her she's worse, I think. I s'pose you know he's your uncle by marriage, don't you?"

"My uncle! Why, no! I didn't know I ever had an aunt," said Ruric, "for you know I've been away from home a good many years, and my correspondence with my mother has always been meagre, she never telling me anything about her family."

"New don't you?" said Dan, opening his pale-blue eyes wide with surprise. "Well, it ain't strange though, after all, considering how long you've been gone. Besides, your mother ain't one to say much about her past, as it must have been a sad one."

"Then that must have been my aunt with the doctor?" asked Ruric.

"Her? No," replied Dan, shaking his yellow hair, dubiously. "She must be some one else. Your aunt died abroad, you know, when she ran away with the doctor, and married him against her parents' wishes. That was over a year ago, you know, and when he came back to the asylum again and took charge, why, he wore a widower's weeds, and never went nigh the old folks in New York, as they were dead set against him, always."

"Did my mother know all this?"

"Of course she did. She don't like Caleb Crane, either, but had to have him attend her, as he's the only doctor hereabouts. She and her sister Maud were bad friends before Maud's death, too, I'm told, for your mother did the same thing Maud Forrester did, and that was to marry a sailor chap, Godfrey Gruesome, your father, against her folks' wishes. Maud sided with the parents, but that was before she did the very same thing herself."

"Oh!" said Ruric, nodding. "What ailed my grandparents?"

"Well, it's said they were mighty rich and proud, and wanted their daughters to marry better than either a lunatic house-keeper or a sailor, and I believe they disowned their children on that account."

Your mother once quarreled with your father over it, as Julia Forrester was proud, and marked the distinction between herself and him. It cut Godfrey Gruesome, for he was a high-spirited man, and they separated. You know how he tried to get you. But your mother was too smart for him, and sent you away to the school you've been at ever since. Your father couldn't find you, so he left your mother, and went to sea, I believe, and that's the last ever seen or heard of him since. But the old folks relented, I'm told, when they found out what her husband did. On account of Maud doing the same thing, right on top of your mother being abandoned by her husband, why, they sent your mother so much money every month ever since, and that's how she's lived."

Ruric's whole history was disclosed to him now by the garrulous Dan, and by the time it ended they reached the cottage.

Entering, the boy was met by a servant, a dark-featured woman of forty, of French appearance, and telling her who he was, she smiled queerly at him and asked him to follow her upstairs.

Conducting him to a bed-chamber, she opened the door, told him his mother was inside, and then followed him in.

It was an ordinary bedroom, nicely furnished, and upon the bed lay a woman of about thirty-five, with her eyes closed.

Hearing him enter, she suddenly sprang to her feet, and the next moment she had Ruric clasped in her arms, and was shedding tears of joy over the boy, as she kissed him again and again, and commenced to question him about his past career.

CHAPTER II.

A DARK NIGHT'S WORK

Having told his mother his history, from the beginning of his college career, Ruric then explained what Dan told him of her life, to all of which the servant listened intently.

Mrs. Gruesome observed the woman after awhile, and exclaimed:

"Marie—you can leave the room!"

"Yes, madame," replied the woman, with a look of disgust.

She went out, closed the door, but out in the hall dropped down on her knees and pressed her ear against the keyhole.

"You were telling me all you learned, Ruric," said Mrs. Gruesome when they were alone, as she and the boy sat near the center-table, "and it is all true. Servants are prying and soon find out all about a person. I wanted you back from school as I was yearning to see you after all these years, and am satisfied that your father is dead, and cannot take you away from me now."

"And you have been sick, mother?"

"Yes. Ruric, I cannot understand it, my mind is strangely becoming affected, and at times within the past week I feel as if I was becoming actually mad! Queer sensations overwhelm me immediately after I finish my meals, and it seems to me that I lose my mind."

"That is very strange, mother."

"Well may you say so, my boy. But you cannot realize it. I lose all my consciousness, and it is hours before I recover from the spell of madness. Yet, how to account for it I do not know."

"You have no enemies who would try to poison you, have you?"

"What a wild notion! Why, no! Of course not. Who would want to poison me? Why should any one design such a thing wantonly? My death would not gratify a revenge, as I have no enemies, nor would it benefit any one in the way of gain. Yet every time I finish eating I am affected as I said."

"An', par diu, so you shall be to ze end, my lady!" softly muttered the woman in the hall. "Ze powdair soon have ze deslair effect an' zen ve see eef you not become mad—mad—mad! Ah, eet ees ze ver' clevalr vav zat ze doctair tell me—zat I poot ze stuff een your food. Ma foi, eet eez ze subtle vav!"

Marie had a small notebook in her hand and a pencil, and as the boy and his mother continued their conversation she rapidly inscribed all their dialogue in the book in shorthand.

Unaware that the spying servant was listening to all they said, ignorant of her sinister motives, and innocent of the idea that she was the authoress of Mrs. Gruesome's ailment (at the instigation of Dr. Caleb Crane), the boy and his mother went on with their conversation several hours longer, and at last separated, the woman to sleep, Ruric to go to his room.

Then on a pretext to her mistress, in order to get out of the house, Marie donned her bonnet and, leaving the cottage with her notebook in her pocket, she hurried away.

The sun was going down, and she selected the shady side of a road leading out of the village toward the madhouse.

Arrived at the plank fence iron gate, beside which stood a small lodge, the woman rang a bell-knob, a gong vented a clang, a rough-looking man emerged from the lodge, opened the gate, nodded surlily to her, and she sped up the broad, gravelled walk, winding among the flower-beds, toward the

The building was octagonal in shape, vine-covered, two stories high, pierced by numberless windows, having a turreted roof, with a small tower at each angle and a broad main entrance door.

Marie Montmedy's small, beady, black eyes snapped as she mounted the steps, rang the bell, and was admitted by Dr. Crane himself.

"Ah, Frenchy, by Jove!" he ejaculated, upon seeing her.

"Monsieur, ze boy zat Mrs. Gruesome wrote for, he coam, sair," she panted.

"Yes, true—I know, by Jove! But come into the office, and give me the news, my faithful little servitor, and more gold shall be yours. I promised to liberally reward you for all the work you did for me."

The avaricious look on the French woman's face plainly told that gold was the god she worshiped, and to gain which she would not scruple at anything she was capable of doing.

She followed him into the office—a plain apartment near the front door—sat down near his desk, produced her book, and read off all she had written therein, with a charming foreign accent.

The doctor listened eagerly until she was through.

"Then I must work fast," said he, after pondering a moment.

"The boy is in the way, but can easily be disposed of for a time. Be in readiness to admit me in your house to-night after you hear the clock strike twelve."

"Monsieur shall find me een readiness," replied the girl.

The madhouse owner arose, opened a bookcase filled with bottles and jars, all numbered and labeled, and filled a small vial.

Handing it to the woman, he said, in deliberate tones:

"This must be the last dose. Give the woman only four drops in her food—no more—remember four drops. Six would kill her. You can give the boy two drops—two drops in his, at the same time."

The woman took the vial and put it in her pocket.

"Zere ees no dangair of ze death?" she asked.

"Not if you do as I prescribe. The decoction is a mixture of neurotic and deliriant poison of my own invention. The ingredients all act on the brain. The neurotic is a little chloral hydrate—only fifteen grains—it produces excitement, delirium and lividity—thirty grains would kill. It is an anesthetic. There is also an inebriant—the Levant nut of the East Indies, the juice of which produces complete loss of voluntary power, with consciousness of passing events. Next, there is atropa belladonna, or Deadly Night Shade, which arouses double vision, giddiness, dilated eyes, delirium, a disposition to laugh and talk wildly, fanciful delusions, a rapid flow of ideas, and some difficulty in walking. Last, but not least, is an atom of Dhatoora, an Indian plant, the seeds of which, mixed with food arouse noisy delusions, all kinds of foolish notions and antics, and in conjunction with the other preparations make a veritable maniac of the person who takes it."

Marie silently nodded, a look of indescribable sickness on her face, as she imagined the effect of what she was commissioned to do.

Caleb Crane next drew a wallet from his pocket.

Extracting fifty dollars, he handed it to the woman, and continued:

"And here, by Jove, is the medicine that will make the other effective. Now go, Frenchy, go, and let my work be well done, my woman."

"An' ven ve feelish, monsieur?" she asked, arising.

"I will pay you five thousand dollars, as I promised."

The woman then hurried out, and made her way to the gate the doctor watching her from the doorway with a cynical smile on his smooth-shaven face, and a queer look in his yellow eyes.

Marie then returned to the cottage, and prepared supper for Ruric and his mother, being careful when all was ready to drop no more than the stipulated quantity of Dr. Crane's devilish mixture in the food for her victims.

At seven o'clock the mother and son partook of the repast in the dining-room, and as Mrs. Gruesome complained of feeling unwell, she left the boy on the piazza to go to her room.

Ruric was reading a book by the light that streamed out of the open parlor window, but within an hour he felt the effect of the subtle drug, and as drowsy as if chloroformed, from

consequence of the chloral hydrate (which, with an alkali, is actually converted into that powerful anesthetic), he laid aside his book, arose, and staggered, rather than walked, to the door.

"Why," he muttered, in choking tones, as he groped his way into the hall, "what—what ails—me? I—I feel—as if—I was strangling! My eyes—my eyes—they—they are bursting and—burning. How—strange—how—odd! C—c—can—I—I—b—b—be sick?"

He pressed his fevered hands to his throbbing temples and, reeling, he fell to the floor, at the foot of the stairs, unaware that Marie had darted out of the parlor, in which she had been sitting, watching him like a lynx, and bent over to lift him up.

Her black eyes seemed to glow like balls of fire in the gloom of the hall, and her breath came and went in short gasps as she muttered:

"Eet ces ovaïrpowair heem at last! Sacre! Now, Monsieur Rureek, upstairs veez you, sair, an' to bed—to bed!"

Just then there sounded a wild shriek in the upper part of the house, the thunderous beating of a chair against a door, and the voice of the boy's unfortunate mother, howling in frenzied accents:

"Mad! Mad! Mad! They have driven me to it at last! Ha! ha! ha! You have locked me in, you demon—you have locked me in—do you hear? I'll batter the door down if you do not liberate me! I'll smash it to fragments—fragments—fragments! Oh—ha! ha! ha! My brain is on fire! My veins are burning lava streams! I—oh, what is the matter? Why do I rave this way? This is strange!"

A low sob followed in plaintive accents, and the noise ceased.

But those shrieking tones aroused the boy momentarily from his stupor.

"My mother!" he cried, wildly, as the voice scared in on his brain, and he bounded to his feet glaring at Marie. "She is sick!"

And with that he rushed upstairs.

But he fell upon the upper landing again, overcome by the drug.

A heartless, sibilant laugh pealed from the French woman's lips, as a low, wailing, moaning sound emanated from Mrs. Gruesome's room, and stooping over Ruric, whom she followed, she dragged him into the apartment next to his mother's, which was set aside for him, hauled him up on the bed, locked the door on the outside and went downstairs.

Several hours passed by, the boy lying like a log on the bed, his breath labored and stertorous, his fingers clutching at the covers, his swollen eyes half open, and his face fairly scarlet.

During that time the woman in the next room was terribly affected, at one moment moaning, whining and sobbing, the next laughing hoisterously, then flying into an intense fit of ungovernable fury.

She raged around the room like a wild beast, smashing everything in her way, hooting, snarling, singing hilariously, and gnashing her teeth.

The clock in the boy's room was striking the hour of twelve, when a more violent paroxysm from the maddened woman aroused him partially, and he heard her shrieking and praying for help.

Ruric was not certain but what his fancy was playing him a trick as he was half dazed yet, his ears humming, and his vision seemed to be strangely impaired.

Mechanically arising and seeing a door communicating with his mother's room standing ajar, he crept over to it and peered in.

What next happened to him seemed a dreadful nightmare.

He imagined he saw his mother's room in a terrible state of disorder, the furniture smashed and overturned, tumbled about in wild confusion, and everything broken and spoiled.

He pressed his hands at his temples, his eyes fairly bursting from his head, his face roasting hot, his breath fetid.

Then there arose a vision before his eyes that seemed to be too terrible to be true, yet it certainly must have been; but he could not clearly see or think, nor could he utter a word.

In the middle of the room was his mother, struggling with savage ferocity to get away from Dr. Caleb Crane, her eyes blazing like live coals, and her face distorted into a most hideous expression of rage.

She was howling and fighting with supernatural strength, and seemed to be endowed with the courage and fortitude of an angel.

The physician was screaming at her, and endeavoring to get a pair of handcuffs linked on her wrists behind her back.

But her violence seemed to frustrate his design.

The scene became blurred, dim and shadowy then to Ruric.

He tried to cry out, but his throat was dry, contracted and sore, his lips were parched with the fires of fever, and respiration was inadequate.

When his vision returned, he looked in again.

There knelt his mother on her knees, her manacled hands clasped together and upheld to Caleb Crane, tears streaming down her cheeks and the man holding a chair over her head, menacingly.

Ruric saw the chair descend with a brutal crash, he heard a pitiful moan, he saw the stricken woman sink down, and he heard the physician cry, in hoarse tones:

"She is senseless! Marie—quick! Come here. Help me!"

Powerless to aid his mother by going to her rescue, he saw the French woman dart forward from an obscure corner, and with an anguish of heart beyond description he saw them lift and carry his mother away.

Held by invisible chains on his muscles, he could not move, but remained on his knees like some stunned, stricken beast.

Then a revulsion took place.

His mind burst through the clouds of the drug, nature being strained to its highest tension, a hoarse cry burst from his lips, he bounded to his feet, and running, tripping, staggering and blindly groping his way, he passed through that dreadful room, out in the hall, and fell headlong down the stairs.

But the shock only brightened his befogged intellect; he got up bruised and sore, rushed to the door and saw the woman and the doctor getting in a coach with his screaming, gabbling mother, and then the vehicle rolled away.

Maddened, nerved up, desperate, he rushed after it.

Down the dusty road it sped, the boy in its wake, running as fast as he could go, until at last it reached the asylum gate.

It passed through, and when he reached the gate he saw them carry his mother out and into the great, grim abode of horror.

He beat at the closed iron gate, he shrieked aloud, and at last, utterly exhausted, he sank down upon the ground, insensible.

CHAPTER III.

A STRANGE AWAKENING.

The moment the dark portals of the madhouse closed behind the figures of Dr. Crane and Marie Montmedy, bearing in the figure of the screaming woman, who had recovered from the blow dealt her by the physician, they both looked intensely relieved.

The madhouse keeper was met by several men in the hall, whom he employed about the establishment.

A few words sent them away again, however, and the maddened woman was forcibly carried through the broad, echoing hall to the floor above, and then brought along a long corridor.

A dozen iron-barred cells opened on either side, out of which glared a maniac in each one, their fingers clutching the bars, their vicious eyes gleaming balefully, their horrible faces in various expressions of different emotions, and their wild yells and mutterings ringing out with blood-curdling intonations.

Some shoved their claw-like hands out and tried to grasp the clothing of the girl, the woman, and the doctor, as they hurried by toward a larger room at the end of the passage.

An ignited lamp stood on the table, a box of matches, a pen, an ink bottle and paper beside it, and a chair was drawn up at one side.

Passing inside, they saw a bed standing in one corner, the door was closed, and the maniac woman stood on her feet.

She uttered a smothered cry, as soon as she was free, and groveling back against the wall, she crouched there furtively glaring at her captors, her face swollen and inflamed.

The doctor laughed, and drew a paper from his pocket.

"Did you ever see medicine work better, Marie?" he asked.

"Eet ees wonderful, sair. Van would sink zat she be ze crazy voman, shufe, sair, an' no meesteek of zat."

"I want her to sign this paper, by Jove, and you to witness it."

"Vot ze papair the say?" asked Marie, curiously.

"Ah! That is my secret, Marie; that is my secret."

A look of disappointed curiosity crossed the French woman's face.

"You trust me viz so much—vy not all?" she asked.

"Because, Frenchy, it would put me in your power, by Jove, and that does not suit my fancy at all, my woman," said the doctor, with a nasty leer, wrinkling the corners of his mouth and queer yellow eyes. "All I now need is your signature as

witness that that woman signed the document, and then you may go home."

"Go 'ome? No—no! Not to-night after vot pass," said a woman, with a shudder of horror. "Ze boy may do me som harm."

"As you please. You may sleep here in this room if you like."

Then he turned to the poor woman who was idiotically driveling, and in a coarse, brutal voice he exclaimed:

"Come here—you! D'you hear me! Come here!"

Whining and moaning the poor unfortunate crept up to him with a scared look upon her red face, and he thrust the pen in her hand and said to her as he opened out the paper:

"Sit down in that chair and affix your name to this paper! You know what you are doing! Now if you don't obey me I will give you such a beating you can't stand up!"

The woman only kept a fixed, vacant, stupid stare on his face, though, and his experience told him she was incapable. Coaxing, pleading, threatening and cajoling were in vain.

Dr. Caleb Crane was not to be swerved from his purpose, though. So he seized her hand, in his own, held the pen between her fingers and traced her name at the bottom of the paper.

Marie watched him intently.

"There," said he with a sigh when he finished, and pushed the woman off on the floor. "That is plain enough! Julia Gruesome. You saw her write it, and can swear to it, can't you, Frenchy? Of course you can, and, by jingo, it will pass as legal anywhere with the signatures of two witnesses. Now you sign it, too!"

He was careful, though, not to expose more of the paper to Marie's inquisitive gaze than the margin she was to sign.

The poor woman was lying prone upon the floor, where Crane flung her, when Marie signed the paper.

"That will do," said the physician, pocketing it. "And now to shear and lock this thing up in a cell so she can do no damage, as I must keep her dosed constantly on that medicine, and keep her here all the rest of her life!"

He seized a pair of scissors from the table, and falling on his knees beside the prostrate woman, he rapidly cut off all her luxuriant dark hair close to the scalp.

She did not say a word, nor offer the least resistance, and only moaned and moaned pitifully, until he suddenly seized her by the arms, and dragged her out into the hall toward a nearby cell, the door of which stood open.

Then she fought him like a tigress.

But he was accustomed to handling maniacs, and with a muttered threat to put her in a strait-jacket on the morrow, he thrust her in and slammed the door shut, after taking the handcuffs from her wrists.

The cell had a spring lock, and he did not observe that it did not catch in the groove entirely, as he walked away.

Returning to the other room he peered in and said:

"She is safe enough now, by Jove, Frenchy, so I'll leave you and retire, as I'm tired out fighting her. This is the room my dear departed wife used to occupy with me. It is noisy, my dear, but if you can stand the racket the incurables make, you'll sleep all right. There's no danger of any of them getting out, and you'll be as safe here in this Bedlam as you would be on an island in mid-ocean, so good-night."

Marie was perfectly satisfied with her quarters, as she had no desire to return to the cottage that night.

And pondering over the strange mystery enshrouding all these queer proceedings at the madhouse, she undressed herself and went to bed, where she soon fell asleep, forgetful of locking her door, she was so wrought up by the exciting events through which she had passed that night.

Despite the wild cries of the incurables, she slept soundly.

Too soundly, in fact!

For, an hour later, her bedroom door was softly and cautiously pushed open, and Mrs. Gruesome's terrible face was thrust into the apartment, and her glance fell on the sleeping Marie.

Finding her cell-door open, she had stolen out, and Marie's room door being the first thing she saw, she had opened it.

Then she crept in, as softly as a cat, and donned Marie's dress and shawl.

On the table the lamp stood dimly burning, and an evil look of cunning treachery stole over the crazed woman's face as she saw the box of matches standing there beside it.

Like a shadow she glided up to the table, and picking up the matches, she began to light them one by one, and flung them, burning, all over the bed.

In a minute the bed-covers all caught aflame.

Recolling up against the door, the crazed woman seized

the knob with one hand, and shook the other at Marie, hissing:

"I owe all my trouble to you, thrice accursed, and my revenge will be to see you roast to death while you sleep. Ha! ha! ha!"

And as her demoniacal laugh pealed out in sibilant inflections, she softly opened the door, passed out in the corridor, and gliding to the other end, she opened a door in a transverse hall.

It was the doctor's sleeping apartment, and he was slumbering in bed, his clothing on a chair beside him.

The woman glided up to his coat, took the paper he forced her to sign from his pocket, but the chair fell with a crash, arousing him.

He jumped up, saw what happened, and rushed after the woman as she sped from the room with a loud laugh.

Opening a window in the hall, she climbed out, and went down the vines growing against the face of the building to the yard, before Crane could get anywhere near her, and with the paper in her possession, she vanished around the building in the yard.

When Ruric Gruesome recovered consciousness, he found himself lying in his bed at the cottage the next morning.

All traces of any adventure he might have had the night before were now gone, for he looked as well as ever.

Jumping up, he hastily drew on his pants.

"My mother! My poor, poor mother!" he moaned, as a look of unutterable woe crossed his face. "What has become of you? How came I here? Oh, heavens! why did all that happen?"

His mind was in a whirl of excitement.

"I must find her," he muttered, grimly. "I must get in that asylum, by force if necessary, and make those terrible wretches give her up—restore her shattered reason, and——"

"Ruric! Are you up yet, my boy?" interrupted a voice.

He started as if stricken a blow.

"Why, good heavens! that is my mother's voice!" he gasped.

The door opened and a lady dressed in black, with her long, dark hair neatly done up on her head, entered the room.

The boy cast but one glance at her; he uttered a gurgling cry, reeled back, his hair standing on end, his face blanched, his teeth chattering, and his eyes bulging out of his head.

"My mother!" he cried, hoarsely. "Alive! well! Oh, what does this mean?"

"Why, Ruric," said the lady, advancing with a sweet, gentle smile on her placid face, "what are you talking about? Are you sick?"

"Great heaven! are you a phantom? Am I sleeping yet?"

"Why, no, my son. I am over my little illness of last night. Marie has rung the breakfast bell, and Dan is waiting to drive us out afterward."

Ruric was almost paralyzed, and gasped, tremblingly:

"Are you sure you were not drugged—crazed—beaten—carried off by Marie and the doctor?"

"You must have been dreaming, Ruric. You slept uneasy all night, I know."

"Slept—uneasy? Oh, heavens! This is not reality. I am a haunted boy!"

And real, natural, and all right as everything now seemed, there was something terribly, fearfully strange in what had passed, for he had not been dreaming.

CHAPTER IV.

AT THE STABLE.

In his bedroom, his mother standing before him, smiling, happy, and evidently no such maniac and sufferer as he thought he saw her the night before, Ruric Gruesome could hardly realize it was not some hideous dream and nightmare he passed through.

He remembered seeing his mother, resembling a maniac in her room, assaulted by both Marie and Dr. Caleb Crane, and the blow she received, the way she was carried away in the coach to the madhouse, and how he fell at the gate, unconscious.

Yet here she was, saying everything must be a dream, he had slept uneasy, Marie Montmedy had rung the breakfast bell, and that Dan was waiting to take them out driving afterwards!

It seemed all too good to be true.

The awful impression stamped on his mind, though, was so vivid that he could not believe he was dreaming, yet that he was haunted by the awful recollection was the real truth.

He felt as if he would go mad puzzling to solve the strange problem.

So he walked over to his mother, kissed her, and saw that she was alive, cheerful, uninjured, and not at all crazed.

His own head ached him some, and he felt a trifle sick at his stomach a few minutes later; but beyond that there was nothing wrong, and a glance in his mother's bedroom showed it to be neat, orderly, and not a thing disarranged or broken!

Yet he thought his crazed mother had smashed everything the night before, when he looked in there!

Nor was the lady's hair cut off!

Yet Doctor Crane had shorn the mad woman's head, and after setting fire to the bed, in which Marie laid slumbering in the madhouse, the crazed woman had climbed down the vines from the window to the yard, leaving the French woman to roast!

Ruric left the room with his mother, fearing he was getting crazy, and there was Marie in the dining-room, pert, dark, and so utterly indifferent that it seemed impossible she was as guilty as he imagined.

After breakfasting, Ruric and his mother got into the surrey and were driven around Irvingdale by the apparently simple-minded Dan.

All points of interest were pointed out by Mrs. Gruesome, the boy taking in everything, but preserving considerable reticence, as his past experience was preying upon his mind.

He told Mrs. Gruesome all he thought he witnessed.

She laughed at it as a mere dream.

On the way home again Ruric suddenly said:

"Dreams generally owe their origination to events, persons and places we have seen, the disordered imagination contorting those things, making the vividest impressions on our minds into grotesque ideas."

"Then," said his mother, "you see how you can account for yours."

"In what way do you mean, mother?"

"Didn't you meet Doctor Crane yesterday?"

"So I did. And you were sick last night, too."

"Then there are the links connecting your fancies while sleeping with the realism of natural order of things. But speaking of the doctor, I want to inform you that Dan made a huge mistake by saying I disliked him so heartily. He is my brother-in-law, you know, and consequently your uncle by marriage. Since Maud, my sister, died in France, and the doctor's return, he has been so assiduous in his attentions to me that I have finally concluded to—to—to——"

"To do what, mother?" asked Ruric anxiously.

His mother was stammering, confused, and had been blushing deeply.

"Well, Ruric, you know how your father ran away to sea deserting me eleven years ago? Well, since then I found I needed a helpmeet in life, and as Doctor Crane was so good and kind and yet gently persistent, and asked me to marry him, why, I have consented."

"What!" cried Ruric, aghast. "You—marry—that—man, mother?"

"Such is my intention, my son; see—here is my engagement ring."

She showed a fine diamond gleaming on her finger.

The boy was too much amazed to speak, and did not at all approve of his mother's action; but all his objections being based on an impulsive prejudice against the little doctor, would not have any weight in an argument against his mother's wedding, so he kept still.

When they came in sight of the tree-embowered cottage, they saw the yellow-eyed little doctor standing on the piazza, talking to Marie.

But they could not, of course, hear what he was saying.

It was, though, something to this effect:

"Marie, they are returning now, by Jove, and the boy looks well enough."

"Ah, doctair, here eez ze vial of ze drug I geef zem. Ze effect, eet vork away from ze boy like magic zeas morning. How lucky zat ze mad voman geet loose, an' set my bed afire! Ma fol, eef not, zen you not vould smell ze smoke, vake up, an' see hair entair your room, to steal ze papair vich she sign, from your pocket!"

"True—true, by Jove! But you would have roasted to death had I not got up to chase her; and after she got out the window I found your room ablaze. So I put out the smoking and fiery bed-covers, saving you from death, and you, lucky woman, would go away, and found Ruric at the gate. Of course, we knew then he must have followed our coach, and at once brought him home, still senseless, and put him to bed. Then you cleared out your mistress' room, putting all

traces of the broken furniture away, and making it look as if a howling maniac had not been in there, destroying everything by bringing in similar furniture. Ha! ha! ha!"

"But ze mad voman geet away viz zo papair, monsieur?"

"Yes, confound her," said the physician, with a dark frown.

"But I will find it again as soon as I capture her."

"Ah! Parbleu! Zen she eez not yet capture?"

"No! A dozen of my asylum keepers are hunting for her, though."

Ruric and his mother, driving up just then, put an end to their conversation, and they all went into the parlor.

The boy felt uneasy in the presence of the doctor and on a slight pretext he left the room, put on his hat, and went out.

There was a small stable in back of the yard, and as he had taken a fancy to his mother's man-of-all-work, he bent his steps there to have a little chat with him about the previous night.

Dan was a new acquisition to the widow's household, Ruric learned from his mother that day, having come along like a tramp the previous month, looking for a job, when she employed him.

When Ruric reached the stable door he paused and peered in.

A startling sight met his view.

In an empty stall stood Dan in an attitude of utter dejection, great tears rolling down his clean-shaven cheeks, sobs breaking from his lips, and in his hand he clutched a yellow wig.

His natural hair was jet black, and his appearance strangely altered.

"Hello, Dan! What does this mean?" cried the boy, jumping in.

The man started, a startled exclamation burst from his lips, he reeled back, and then he tried to replace the wig on his head ineffectually.

"Ruric!" he muttered, utterly aghast.

"Yes, Dan. But why under heaven are you wearing a wig? You don't need it, I am sure, unless it is to make you look ten years younger."

Dan was terribly confused, and could hardly stammer a reply.

"Wig? I—don't—that is—this—you——"

"Hold on. You are terribly flustered. What ails you?"

"Nothing," replied Dan, forcing himself to be calm. "Nothing at all."

"Why! And you don't speak countrified, either," sharply observed the boy.

Dan's face had grown pale. It now turned very red.

His confusion was increasing to a painful degree, too.

"Don't I?" he muttered, with a scared look.

"No. I see through it. You have disguised yourself for some purpose; that is very evident. You can't get out of it with excuses, so don't try to. Now, own up. What is your reason? I won't tell."

Dan replaced the wig on his head, dried all traces of tears from his eyes, and pondering a moment, he said, in his natural tones:

"Since you have found me out, I will confess to you. I am in disguise, Ruric, and I am prompted by a strange, but powerful motive. I know I can depend upon you to keep my secret. I am a friend to you, my boy, and heaven knows you will need one here, for a league of enemies are surrounding you."

"What do you mean by that, Dan?"

"Oh, I cannot explain myself at present. Let me give you this much information: Doctor Crane is a villain, and I am endeavoring to get certain information against him to cause his arrest."

"So—that's how it is, eh? I understand—you are a detective?"

"Well, perhaps I am, Ruric."

"Then I will keep your secret."

"I am sure you will."

"Did you hear the news, Dan?"

"News? What news?"

"My mother is engaged to be married to him."

"Oh, yes!" said the man, with a violent start. "I heard it when I drove you and her out, just awhile ago, in the surrey. But I can safely predict that wedding will never take place, if I can prevent it by any means. Your mother is not sure that your father is dead yet, is she? You know that their eleven years' separation annuls their marriage, but still, as your father may be living for all she knows, she ought not get married again."

"Just what I think. You see, therefore, that your idea that she disliked the doctor was erroneous—wasn't it?"

"Oh, she always pretended to dislike him formerly; you can

imagine I was surprised to learn that it was not only to the contrary, but that she is going to marry him."

"Why do you want to arrest him?"

"Do not question me about my secret, for I cannot divulge anything until it is properly matured; then you will learn all, and a startling surprise it will prove, I can assure you."

"Where were you last night, Dan?"

"Down to New York. I had some private business to attend to, and leaving here about nine o'clock, I did not return until this morning."

"Oh!" said Ruric, with a nod.

He now comprehended why Dan made no mention of any of the strange happenings of the night before, if they were indeed as true as he was firmly convinced they were; yet, if it was a dream, Dan would have known nothing, even if he had been present.

Finding his mind puzzling over the strange event again, the boy tried to dismiss it from his mind with a sigh, for he had counted on gaining some information from an, and was now disappointed.

He was about to turn away, when there sounded a frightful scream at the door behind him, and a maniacal voice crying:

"Listening! Listening at the door, eh? Ho! ho! ho! But I've got you!"

"Murdair! Let me go! Par dieu! you choke me!" shrieked another voice.

Dan and Ruric, startled, rushed to the door.

There stood Marie, notebook in hand, caught in the act of taking down all Ruric and Dan's conversation, she having stealthily followed the boy from the house, and overheard all that passed in the barn.

And the person who held her by the throat was the maniac woman, attired in Marie's dress, her hair cropped short, and a wild, crazed look on her distorted face as she pounced on the French girl.

An asylum keeper had been pursuing her, and just then rushed in the yard.

Ruric's glance fell upon her as the keeper caught her and dragged her away and out the gate, aided by Marie, and reeling back in a frenzy, he hoarsely cried:

"Good heaven! it is my mother! It was no dream. She is a maniac!" and he fell in Dan's arms half-fainting from nervous shock.

CHAPTER V.

"I AM GODFREY GRUESOME."

A few moments later Marie returned to the stable and found Ruric pale and troubled, leaning against Dan, near the door, just recovered.

"Sacre!" she panted. "Eet vos von lunatics vot eescape ze asylum."

Dan had not seen the crazy woman's face, but he darted toward Marie, caught her roughly by the arm, and exclaimed:

"Now you tell me if you weren't listening out here when she caught you."

"Leesten—me—out—here?" stammered Marie. "Vy, no, sir, Meestair Dan."

"Do not lie! she said you did!"

"Zat ees ze great meeteck! I coam 'ere zat I tell Mastair Rureek to coam in ze house, hees mothair she weesh to speak viz heem."

"My mother!" wildly exclaimed the boy, glaring at the woman with distended eyes. "She was just here—here at the door—that poor, unfortunate lunatic. She is my mother. I knew I was right. I saw her last night as you and the doctor beat her and carried her away. I saw it all, I tell you."

The woman stared at him with an amazed look and recoiled a step.

Even Dan was startled and glanced curiously at the boy.

"You must be dreaming, Ruric," said he. "Your mother is no maniac—she is in the house. Don't you remember I just drove you and her out?"

The boy gazed at Dan with a bewildered look.

He passed his hand mechanically across his forehead, and then murmured:

"Yes—I think—I think I do. Yet—last—night. I—oh, Dan, am I a haunted boy, or am I becoming a veritable maniac myself?"

His voice was piteous, and his actions full of despair.

"Coam viz me," said Marie, softly touching his arm. "You certainly are not ver' well, Mastair Rureek, to sink ze lunatics eez your mothair."

The boy flung her hand from his arm as if it stung him.

"Let go of me!" he exclaimed, hollowly. "I distrust you!"

There is something sly and diabolically deep about you! I despise you! I loathe you!"

Scared at the terrible look he gave her, Marie retreated.

"I go een!" she panted. "I tell your mothair you scon stair."

And so saying she sped away to apprise the doctor of all she overheard before the boy could get into the house.

She had seen the asylum keeper dragging the crazed woman away, and felt sure the poor unfortunate would be taken back to the asylum from which she had so adroitly made her escape.

Moreover, having discovered that Dan was not the person he represented himself to be, claimed his profession as that of a detective, and avowed it his object to get certain proof against the doctor to arrest him, she deemed it advisable to put the physician on his guard.

The doctor sat in the parlor alone when she entered.

He looked nervous and excited to a high pitch.

The moment Marie came in he bounded toward her, his smooth face twitching, his yellow eyes burning luridly, his long nose drawn down.

"That cry I just heard!" he cried, hoarsely, as he seized Marie by the arm. "What—what was it? Speak! Did I rightly recognize that voice?"

"Bet vos ze womans vot escape," replied Marie, nodding.

"Ha! then she is here?"

"Ze keepair pairsue an' breeing hair back."

"Did any one see her?"

"Ze boy."

"Oh, good heaven!"

"He recognize hair, too."

"Worse and worse!"

"Still worse, monsieur. Leesten to zeas."

And she read her report of all that passed between Ruric and Dan.

Dr. Caleb Crane was a startled man when she finished.

"He a detective on my trail?" he groaned. "This is indeed a bad state of affairs. But it can easily be remedied, Frenchy. I must get him in my power and lock him up in the asylum. Oh, I am so glad the woman is recaptured. It relieves my mind."

Unfortunately for him, though, at that moment, on her way back to the asylum, the mad woman fell upon the keeper, overpowered him by her supernatural strength, felled him to the ground, and got away again.

Mrs. Gruesome entered the room just then smiling and radiant.

"Well, Marie, have you told Ruric to come in so that I could inform him when my marriage with the doctor takes place?" she asked.

The French woman and the physician exchanged significant glances.

Mrs. Gruesome did not notice it, however.

"Yats, ma'am," said the woman. "He soon coom een,

"But what, Marie?" asked the woman, as Marie hesitated.

Marie tapped her forehead with her index finger, meaningly.

"Madame, I fear me zat ze boy oos affected een ze brain," said she.

Before any reply could be made to this pertinent observation the door was thrust open and Ruric rushed into the room, crying excitedly:

"I will convince myself! I will convince myself that the face of that maniac was not my mother's—that I am not haunted by a strange vision—that I am not a veritable

His startled gaze fell upon Mrs. Gruesome.

A gurgling cry burst from his lips.

He paused, glaring at her like one who has suddenly received a blow that stuns all the sensibilities for an instant.

Then he recovered his faculties.

"My mother!" he fairly shrieked, as he held out his arms.

"Ruric! My son!" cried Mrs. Gruesome, in startled tones.

The trembling boy covered his eyes with his hands.

"I am haunted; haunted! haunted!" he groaned.

A deathly silence prevailed in the room for a moment.

Then Mrs. Gruesome started toward him.

"Ruric, my boy," said she, softly, "you are sick."

"The vision of last night is gone—the reality remains here!" the boy continued, looking up, a bright spot glowing on either cheek, "and yet they said she was mad. I saw her frenzied. But she is not crazy at all. For here she is natural, sane and well."

"Have you had another of those dreadful hallucinations?"

He paused, shook his head mournfully, and said:

"Yes, they will haunt me forever, mother."

"You must let the doctor hear all about this, Ruric, and it is his branch of the profession, he may be able to help y—"

"He? Doctor Crane? Never!"

"Ruric, this gentleman is soon to become your father."

"My father? Yes, yes, you said to-day you were going to marry him. But he can never be my father else than by law."

"How strangely you rave, my son!"

"Forgive me, mother. I—I feel so forlorn."

A sneering smile flitted over the physician's smooth face, and he muttered beneath his breath:

"The young viper must have seen what transpired, by Jove! He and I must be enemies, but I will crush him. He saw the mad woman, and coming in here and meeting my future bride he cannot comprehend it. No wonder the little beggar is confused."

"Why do you speak this way, Ruric?" queried Mrs. Gruesome.

"Oh, mother, I do not know," replied the boy, despairingly.

"The doctor has figured so in what I saw, or thought I saw last night, that I cannot reconcile myself to it, even to please you, and you are all I have in the world to love and cherish."

"Nonsense, Ruric, it was all some strange fancy. Banish it from your mind, my son, and you will soon forget it."

"Poor boy, poor boy!" sighed the doctor, sympathetically.

"I do not know what ails him, Julia, but judging from what I hear I should say he is possessed of a certain morbid imagination, an optical delusion, owing to a peculiar tumorous formation growing on the brain, which may be easily eradicated—"

"I have not," emphatically interposed Ruric. "Do not delude yourself about me. I am as sane as you are, sir."

At this moment the door opened again and Dan walked in.

He swept a keen, piercing glance around the room and saw Marie and the physician start with trepidation, draw closer to each other, and Ruric and Mrs. Gruesome glanced around.

"Dan!" ejaculated the lady. "What do you want here?"

"Mrs. Gruesome, I must have a word with you."

"Ah! How oddly altered your voice is!"

"Yes. Further concealment, I have concluded, is useless!"

"What do you mean, sir? Have you taken leave of your senses?" demanded Mrs. Gruesome, in surprised tones.

"Not at all," was the cool rejoinder. "I must speak to you privately before Doctor Crane leaves this house, madam."

"You—speak—privately—with—me?" gasped the surprised woman.

"Exactly. That is just what I said."

"You forget yourself, Dan! Your boldness and impudence will cost—"

"Oh, do not threaten me! Your answer! Will you grant me an interview?"

"This audacity from you is appalling. I hold no private interviews with my servants. Speak out here—where you are."

"But, Mrs. Gruesome, I warn you it is not to your advantage to have what I say made public," said Dan.

"Speak!" cried the lady in exasperation. "Speak, or leave this room!"

She drew herself up proudly and pointed at the door.

The man simply smiled nonchalantly and replied, in a low tone:

"Very well. As you like. I have offered you the last opportunity. Now, then, for my communication. I wanted simply to warn you not to marry Caleb Crane, that is all."

"You—advise—me? Dan, you are my hireling—do you forget it?"

"No, Mrs. Gruesome, I do not forget it."

"Then how dare you speak so? How dare you put me on equality with me—your mistress—to give such advice?"

And a haughty, scornful look—the proud, aristocratic French look she inherited from her parents—swept over her face.

For an instant Dan was silent, regarding her with a look of bitterness delineated upon his face.

Then he said, in suppressed tones:

"Do not force me to go to extremes, madam."

"Extremes—my servant—my man-of-all-work! Ha! ha! extremes!"

"I can make a startling revelation—one that will crush you—if you drive me to desperation!" hissed Dan, angrily.

"Your boast mystifies me. I defy you, sir!"

"Then so be it. Say—do you know me? Look at my features, Julia Gruesome, and tell me, do you know me?"

He tore off his wig and stood exposed before her.

There was a deathly silence in the room.

His mother was stylishly attired, and claimed to have just returned from the city with Marie; indeed, they both carried bundles in their hands.

Mrs. Gruesome was weeping at the loss of the cottage, and Ruric to hurry over to the asylum to summon the doctor, whose advice she wanted to ask in her trouble.

Off started the bewildered, unhappy boy down the dusty road in the moonlight, feeling sure that he soon would become demented if he was pursued by the dreadful phantom of his mother any more.

He had traversed but half the distance to the great gray-stone edifice, thinking that now his mother was going to marry the doctor they would have to live in the shade of horrors, when he was startled by hearing a crashing in the bushes lining the road on the left-hand side.

Pausing breathlessly he listened.

A man's voice—and it was the doctor's too—reached his ears.

"You won't, eh?" he was shouting from amid the bushes. "But I say you will! You stole the paper from my pocket, and I am going to have it back from you if I have to kill you to get it!"

"Leave me be! Oh, merciful Father, help me! Don't strike me with your fist! Ha! ha! ha; Ho! ho! ho! Blaze away, you old curmudgeon!"

There sounded a terrific threshing about in the bushes, a demoniacal howl of agony, and then that terrible cackling again.

It almost froze Ruric's blood to hear it.

For the tones were in his mother's voice!

Into the bushes he crept, trembling lest his worst fears should prove true, his heart fairly in his mouth, and his hair bristling on his head.

He parted the bushes and glanced through.

A small, circular glen was before him.

In the middle stood the doctor, and on the ground the same wild woman with his mother's face, her form and her voice.

On his knees, Ruric groaned aloud, and burst into a cold perspiration.

"Can she be in two places at once?" he groaned, in agonized tones.

The doctor gave the screaming woman a brutal kick.

"I've got you, and you'll go back to the asylum, since you escaped the keeper to-day!" he shouted, furiously, as the woman rolled over.

But cut, bruised, bleeding and agonized as the poor creature was, she laughed jeeringly, suddenly bounded to her feet pushed the doctor over, sprang into the dense bushes, and vanished in a twinkling!

Ruric rushed into the glen as the physician arose.

"Doctor Crane!" he gasped, wildly. "Tell me—I implore you—I beseech you, was that woman my mother? Was she—was she? Speak!"

Amazed at his sudden and unexpected presence there, the doctor gaped, and stared at him in speechless confusion a moment.

Then he pulled his wits together by an effort, and gasped:

"Your mother? Why, no. She is nothing like your mother!"

"She is! She is! Her face, voice, figure—all—all are the same."

"You must be out of your head, by Jove, Ruric—your fancy is playing a trick on you again. How came you here?"

"Our house was set on fire—is burning now, and my mother sent me—"

"Your mother sent you from the village? Then how can you see the mad old woman without any hair, who escaped from the asylum is her? You see, you must be as mad as a March hare!"

"It is either that, or I am a haunted boy!" gasped Ruric.

Mrs. Gruesome, and Marie, and Ruric then went to the asylum, as it was decided that they were to live there after the wedding, and while the authorities looked for the firebug the fire engine extinguished the flames.

Ruric was a good deal taken in the asylum, and men went out to hunt for the woman who had been haunting Ruric.

The next day, at three o'clock in the afternoon, the church was filled with the invited guests, and the doctor and his bride.

Ruric and Marie were seated amid the guests.

It was to be a grand, showy wedding, as the doctor was anxious to be rich, and all the wealthiest residents of Irvington were present.

The great organ ceased playing when the nuptial pair reached the railing and knelt down, and the ceremony proceeded.

But hardly was the service half finished, when there sounded a wild, piercing shriek that rang through the sacred edifice thrilling every one.

And the next instant down the center aisle dashed the mad woman.

Every one started to their feet with cries of alarm.

Ruric bounded from his pew and made a rush at the woman.

"My mother! My mother!" he cried, in sobbing tones.

The doctor's face had turned as pale as death.

Like a madman he left his startled bride, and ran for the woman, the same woman who had haunted him.

They both caught hold of her at the same time.

"I will find out the truth now!" panted the boy.

"And I will get her out of here," grimly muttered the doctor, "or I am ruined, and will go to prison for it."

The mad woman, shouting and struggling in the meantime, was endeavoring to get away from them, but they both clung to her with a strength that she could not overcome.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. BENJAMIN H. RINGS.

The wedding guests in the Episcopal church were cast in an uproar of excitement to see the mad woman rush in so unexpectedly and interrupt the half-finished ceremony.

Mrs. Gruesome had been deserted by Caleb Crane, so that he could run over and seize his escaped patient, Marie rushed to her mistress' side, and Ruric caught hold of the woman who haunted him so, the same time the doctor did.

The boy was cast into a veritable fever.

He seemed to see his mother's face everywhere he went, at times when he knew she was absent, and in places she never was at.

First, it was in what seemed a wild phantasmagoria; next she appeared at the stable, then on the grape arbor, and last in a fierce struggle in the bushes with the doctor.

It was his mother—he could take a solemn oath to it!

"I will find out the truth now!" he had cried, thrillingly.

And equally as determined to get the mad creature out of the church, Caleb Crane struggled with him for possession of her, saying to himself that her remaining would send him to prison!

It was a singular situation, and as Ruric held on to his mother, and the doctor did likewise, the struggling woman flung up her arms and violently threw them aside, wrenching herself free by a terrific effort of her strength.

Then she made a dash for the door, uttering her unearthly laugh that sent a chill of horror through every one in the church, as they watched her strange figure disappearing.

"She transforms her appearance like a magician!" muttered Ruric, wildly. "She is possessed of mysterious powers of supernatural kinds to make two distinct beings of herself—to have two natures—to be in two places at the same time to—Ha! I thought so!"

He had looked back at the altar, and saw that the woman—his mother—the bride—had vanished; but he did not know that Marie had conveyed her to the vestry-room, while he was looking after the mad woman.

That led him to imagine his theory of the woman being invested with transfiguration power being true!

It must be borne in mind that the peculiarity of every incident in connection with his sight of the crazed woman was such as to mystify him—therefore it was not queer that he attributed everything to the unnatural.

"The bride of a moment ago is gone!" he muttered, in horror-struck tones, "and the wild monstrosity I struggled with is her other self, fled out the door! Am I not haunted—is it reasonable to think I am a fool? Oh, my life here is a burden to me—a burden! How happy I was at school! But—ah, there goes the doctor!"

Caleb Crane felt uncomfortable at finding himself the cynosure of all eyes, standing with the boy in the middle aisle, and wondering whether the face of the lunatic had been observed by any one save Ruric, he hurried into the vestry-room to join Marie and his bride.

Left alone, and seeing the minister follow the doctor, and every one rising as if to depart, Ruric put on his hat and rushed from the church intensely excited.

"I'll follow the strange creature!" he gasped. "I'll not give up until I fathom this awful mystery. Let me see: the spirit leaves the body as in a dream, making two people of one! Confound it, why do I speculate this way? I'll have my brain turned with perplexity if I keep on!"

When he got outside, he began to look around to learn in which direction the woman had gone.

er than.
heading toward the lunatic asylum, and
dusty road as fast as he could go.

In the woman the night before, the bushes parted
and the crazed creature peered out at him.

Attired in the dress and shawl she had taken from Marie,
presented a most peculiar appearance.

The boy saw her face, and came to a pause.

"Mother!" he cried, despairingly.

Loud laugh was all the reply he received, and then the
vanished from Ruric's sight, like a flash.

Peering in among the bushes, and caught a glimpse of her
fleeing from him at a rapid pace.

He was determined to catch her.

He could not define the feelings he underwent, but felt
that one moment's conversation with her would clear away
the wild fancy that possessed him of her being supernatural.

The woman, though, had been so ill-treated that she feared
him, and made no distinction with the boy.

Ruric after her, and the bushes, saplings, trees
hindering his progress, he had many a fall, bruise

but he kept pressing on.

He made a circuit toward the asylum gate, and as it
dashed through, past the keeper.

He was in the yard now, and it seemed impossible
that he could get out again, as the plank fence was high and
there was no other exit from the grounds save the one gate.

He ran down toward the river side of the yard, and dashed
toward the gardener's tool-house in one corner.

There was a barrel standing close to the wall, upon which
he climbed, and then with the nimbleness of a cat she sprang
on top of the fence.

He ran down the path toward her, but the mad woman
lanced herself, with outstretched arms, an instant on the
edge and then sprang off on the other side.

The boy was in despair of capturing her now, for he knew
that she could easily get away with the start she had.

He ran up to the barrel, and peering over the fence when
he got on top of it he saw his mother rushing down the hill
toward the glittering river flowing far below.

After she disappeared amid the trees,
in pursuit of her, having seen at a glance what the trouble was.

Ruric said not a word, but went back to the asylum.
He went into the doctor's office, and sat down to await
Crane's return from the church, a grim resolve in his
mind to have an understanding with the wily physician.

Sitting in a chair near the window, he became so absorbed
in thought that he did not notice the entrance of a stranger
until he was suddenly startled by hearing an insinuating:

"Hello, Ruric!"

With a violent start, Ruric looked up.

Before him stood a tall, thin individual, as straight as an
arrow, with a high standing collar, a black cravat,

Prince Albert coat, and a pair of excessively
long legs that made his great big feet look much larger
than they were.

He wore black cotton gloves, carried an umbrella,
cadaverous face, a long, sharp nose, hollow eyes
of whiskers of a yellow color and sparse settle-

mentary lip being shaven clean.

His legs were crossed, one foot resting on
the other, and he looked at Ruric with a cold, steady gaze.

"Good-afternoon, sir," said the stranger, in solemn tones, and with-

out a smile.

"What do you want?" asked Ruric, looking at the stranger
with a questioning glance.

"I want to see your mother," said the stranger, with a
cold, steady gaze.

"My mother?" asked Ruric, looking at the stranger
with a questioning glance.

"Yes, your mother," said the stranger, with a cold, steady
gaze.

"Where is she?" asked Ruric, looking at the stranger
with a questioning glance.

"In her room," said the stranger, with a cold, steady
gaze.

"What time is it?" asked Ruric, looking at the stranger
with a questioning glance.

"It is now," said the stranger, with a cold, steady
gaze.

"What do you want?" asked Ruric, looking at the stranger
with a questioning glance.

"I want to see your mother," said the stranger, with a
cold, steady gaze.

"Where is she?" asked Ruric, looking at the stranger
with a questioning glance.

"In her room," said the stranger, with a cold, steady
gaze.

The lanky, black-clothed, straight-laced stranger complied,
with a sigh.

"In me, young man," said he, fixing an intent look at Ruric
from his hollow eyes, "you behold a disciple of the immortal

Benjamin H. Bings."

"I suppose you are the doctor's solicitor, sir," ventured
Ruric, at random.

"Heretofore, my young and guileless friend," was the reply,
with never a swerve of his settled, far away glance, "I may
state that I have not had that felicity. But hereinafter, per-
mit me to add, I expect to be favored as aforesaid in the settle-
ment of a certain estate suddenly reverting to parties herein-
after to be named, theretofore cementing a bond of business
and finance between us, which hereinafter may give general
satisfaction."

"He's a crank," thought Ruric.

The skinny man winked at him knowingly.

Then he doffed his stove-pipe, drew a red bandana from out
of the crown, and wiping his bald head very carefully (after
laying his umbrella down on the floor), he dropped the hand-
kerchief in the hat again, and put the faded tile on his head
once more with the remark:

Judging by appearances, which is sometimes a great mis-
take, I may venture to announce it as my belief, pace tua, that
you are domiciled here?"

"Yes," assented Ruric, "I live here. The doctor is my—my
stepfather now."

"Indeed! Then, as a sequence, you heretofore figured as
the offspring of a lady known and acknowledged in due form
as the spouse of one Godfrey Gruesome, a person of nautical
vocation, who was wrecked at sea?"

"My mother's name was Gruesome."

"Exactly so—exactly so; and, before her marriage, Julia
Forrester—eh?"

"Yes; but why do you ask—how do you know?"

"My Christian youth, it behooves me to explain facts here-
inafter to appear according to judicial form. The worthy phy-
sician and I have heretofore been in correspondence arising,
as the Latin says, *auri sacra fames*. He has married your re-
spected mother, and as the aforesaid case relates to the party
of the second part of the contract; in other words, your
mother, the party of the first part, or, in other words, the
mentioned case."

"Do you mean to say my mother is involved in a legal
case?"

"Precisely so, my discerning young friend. In short, she
is the legal administrator of the deceased testator's effects, and
year humble servant, as the legal administrator of the de-
ceased testator's effects, are retained to arrange the settlement
of affairs, and make you all happy."

"Who was it that died and left my mother this fortune, sir?"

"Mr. James Forrester, the only living relative your mother
had, my fortunate youth, his wife having passed away a week
ago, and the fortune, amounting to over one million, has been
willed to your mother and to——"

But just then the door was flung open with a crash, and
before the rusty legal light could say "you," in rushed the doc-
tor, interrupting him. Up rose the stiff figure of Benjamin H.
Bings, but not his hand, and the two men shook hands.

The doctor was alone, and had heard what the lawyer was
saying, and he had arrived in time to prevent a disclosure of what he wanted kept
an inviolable secret.

CHAPTER VIII.

RURIC FINDS HIS FATHER.

After greeting the lawyer and enjoining him by a gesture
to be silent, the doctor turned to the boy, and said, in concise tones:

"Your mother lies ill up in her room from the shock on
her nerves produced by the advent of that lunatic in the
church, and wants you to go up and see her, Ruric."

"Before I go," said the boy, with a dark, steady gaze,

"I want to see your mother," said the boy, with a dark, steady
gaze.

"Where is she?" asked Ruric, looking at the doctor
with a questioning glance.

"In her room," said the doctor, with a cold, steady
gaze.

"What time is it?" asked Ruric, looking at the doctor
with a questioning glance.

of the vagaries of lunatics. They take a notion in their heads and follow it up, much the same as an animal

Ruric shuddered and clasped his temples with his hands as that his own mind was affected somehow.

As soon as the doctor came down the stairs, he closed the door and turned to his caller, who sat in a chair by the desk as immovable as a statue, with:

"My dear Mr. Bings, the boy is a queer fellow—a very odd chap, indeed. But he's gone now, so by your leave we will talk of the occasion of your call."

"With all my heart, my Christian friend," said the rusty legal light, with a nod that threw his old plug hat over his left eye.

"Well, then, the cause of your call is, as I surmise, from having told you to come when it happened——"

"As hereinafter will appear, my worthy doctor, James Forrester died two days ago," solemnly said Mr. Bings, "and relenting entirely toward his recreant daughter in the end, he has made her and her son heirs to his immense fortune."

"Ah! The boy, too, is named in the will, eh?"

"Precisely so. The fortune aforesaid amounts to one mil-

lioned, from the fact of its being about what will recompense Mr. Benjamin H. Bings for his legal functions in the matter: and one-third is named for the boy, two-thirds for his mother."

"I presume you have got the will?"

"My dear and worthy sir," replied the barrister, with a wave of his gloved hand, "that important document has been duly filed with the surrogate in forma propra, and there you may see it any time."

"Oh, yes, I see!" said the doctor.

"In behalf of your—ahem—your wife, my delectable sir," proceeded the skinny man, with a spasmodic cough behind his bony hand, "I may venture to surmise that you will make an effort, through the instrumentality of your humble servant, to lay claim to the aforesaid fortune. In point of fact, when you favored Benjamin H. Bings with a visit some days ago, at his sanctum sanctorum, you intended that such a proceeding would inevitably ensue."

"True," assented the doctor, with a cagy look in his yellow eyes, "but are there any specifications in regard to the administration of Ruric Gruesome's share of this money in the will?"

"As in hereinafter to be shown," said the lawyer, stiffly, "it will become manifest that the daughter of deceased—the aforesaid Julia Gruesome, nee Forrester—shall be the aforesaid guardian."

"Ah!" said the sapient doctor in bland tones, and with a blander smile on his smooth face. "I see! I see! Very good! Very good!"

"I have the document duly signed and witnessed, that I prepared for you, against the event of your marriage, and the aforesaid demise of the testator in the case herein discussed?"

The doctor's face lengthened considerably, and he shook his head.

"No—not yet," said he, hesitatingly. "The fact is, you know, I have neglected the matter, but I can safely promise you to have it at your office by Monday or Tuesday of next week."

"Exactly—exactly so, my faithful friend," said the lawyer, with another nod that threw his plug hat back from his left eye. "It is a matter, though, which should not be neglected too long, as the sooner I get to work the sooner the aforesaid money will be distributed, and the happier we all will be—eh? As the Latin has it, labor omnia vincit—labor conquers everything."

"The document to give me power of attorney to manage my wife's business affairs," said Crane, "also including the care of my stepson's inheritance shall be soon forthcoming. My wife has signed it, but before I could get the signature of Ruric it was misplaced, and I have neglected to look for it. But have no fear of further delay, Mr. Bings—you shall have it next week. This is Saturday—a few days will not make very much difference I am sure."

"As aforesaid," the skinny lawyer remarked, with a blink of his eyes and a scratch at his sparse yellow whiskers, "and so forth, et cetera. Duly

witnessed, sworn to, and given, the heretofore mentioned paper withheld in my hands will evade much trouble all parties interested, and place the whole matter of settlement in our power—on your part, as your wife is not well and the boy a minor, and my—hem! my part to hasten the interests

of my clients, and at the same time I shall be able to perform my work."

An explosive cough followed this speech.

"What else?" said the doctor, looking at his watch.

"Nothing, sir," said the lawyer, as he stiffly and solemnly arose.

Then he made a sudden dash at his throat, coughed three times, like pulling corks out of a bottle, and added, with a gasp:

"Strange—strange—singular! The cough of the doctor is singular——"

"What ails you?" queried the physician, in surprise.

"My dear doctor, it is a peculiarity of my family. The bronchial tubes suddenly become dry as tinder, from want of lubrication, and——"

"How would a little brandy go?" interrupted the physician.

"Brandy? I do not know, sir. But I occasionally oil the trachea to keep the common carotid artery in a normal state of activity."

He bent his elbow.

The doctor understood the mystic sign.

So he produced a bottle, glasses, and they imbibed what the lawyer denominated "hookers," after which Benjamin Bings departed.

When he was gone, the doctor vented a sigh of relief and the door opening, Marie came in from the adjoining room.

She had her notebook and pencil in her hand, having been assiduously at work jotting down the dialogue in preparation for the physician's benefit, unknown to him.

"Well, Frenchy" he said, taking a seat, "what news?"

"Ze boy, monsieur, go to madam's room," said the woman.

"As I ordered him to do. And then?"

"He tell hair all about ze mad vomans."

"At which she scoffed, of course—eh?"

"Sartainly, sair. Zen—vot you sink 'appen, par bleu!"

"Heaven only knows, Marie. What was it?"

"Rurick nearly find hair to be——"

"What?" shouted the doctor, in a sudden fit of alarm.

"I don't know, but she say, until at last she say she can't write. I know vot zat she say; until at last she say she can't write."

Another sigh of intense relief burst from the doctor's

"Bless her heart! How cute, to be sure!" he gasped, feverishly. "Did you hear what I said to the lawyer, Frenchy?"

"Yais, monsieur. Het I 'ave all written een ze book 'ere."

"Then you know that I must secure that lunatic and the paper back which I forced her to sign."

"Yais, monsieur."

"If it was not for your fear of perjury I would have Julia Gruesome's name to it myself, forging it as cleverly as she could write it. But no—you would not do it, so I had to do it myself. I had to swear you saw her sign her name to the paper."

"Monsieur," sweetly said Marie, "I know I be ver' bad vomans to do all I deed do for gold; yet all I do can be remedied: but to once take ze false oath to von forgery you cannot recall."

"The deuce take your ninety of conscience!" growled the doctor, savagely. "But never mind, I'll get the paper back by capturing the woman, and then send it to Bings, so as to get control of the legacy—do you see? Ha! What is that?"

The noise of voices in the hall, and a wild howl were

He ran out, and there stood two keepers with the woman, whom they pursued down to the river, and had captured.

At the same moment there sounded a furious uproar upstairs.

The doctor rushed away in alarm, mounting the stairs three at a jump.

In the hall on which the lunatics were confined, he saw Ruric striving to open one of the cells, the madmen all around creating the furious disturbance he heard.

A cry of dismay burst involuntarily from the doctor's throat. For the cell contained Ruric's father—Godfrey Crane.

CHAPTER IX.

DOWN IN THE DUNGEON.

Having left his mother sitting in the elegantly furnished apartment the doctor had brought her to, Ruric had gone into the corridor on which the cells opened, and heard someone call him.

He held his father, unresisting hand and foot, in a cell.

"Good heavens!" groaned the boy. "The doctor lied to me. He said he was from the college, a jeering impostor, but was sent here and confined! My mother is Crane's victim! She has committed suicide by exposing the scoundrel!"

"Ruric!" cried the prisoner, frantically.

"What all you hold sacred and dear, get me out of here! Caleb Crane did this. He wants to get me out of his way to perpetrate some rascality. In the midst of these madmen my brain will turn. Save me! Save me!"

"You are really my father, then?" panted the boy.

"I call Heaven to witness that I am!"

"I believe you. Yet my mother denied it—she did not recognize you."

"Ruric, she must have been mistaken. Once I am free I will prove to you that I am no impostor. I will prove to you that Caleb Crane is a villain—I will prove to you that some strange influence has been exercised upon your poor, deluded mother, to turn her so against me."

"It must be so!" panted the unhappy boy. "Heaven knows I have been strangely haunted by her. It all seems like magic to me. At one moment she seems the incarnation of sweet, motherly tenderness and love, when next I meet her she is changed strangely in appearance, a jeering, maniacal being, maddening in manner and disgust; a veritable fiend in looks and in nature."

"Open the door, Ruric. Let me out of here. And once I get my hands on the throat of that infamous reptile, Caleb Crane, I will wring a confession of the motive that actuates him from his villainous lips, if I perish doing it."

He clutched a bar of his cell in a frenzy, and violently shook it, making his manacles clank with a dismal sound.

Ruric's heart bled for the unhappy man, and he was endeavoring to get the cell door open when the doctor rushed up, passed on him, caught him by the neck, and with one fling sent him reeling across the corridor, away from the door.

"Get out of here! Clear out!" he shouted furiously.

"You liberate my father, you scoundrel!" cried the boy.

"Your father? Are you mad?"

"No, Caleb Crane, not as mad as you often intimate I am!"

"That man is not your father, I tell you."

"Then who is he, I'd like to know?"

"An incurable lunatic who strangely enough bears a slight resemblance to the impostor who deceived your poor mother at her cottage."

"Very likely!" sneered the boy. "It is very singular that you should not know your own parents according to your claim!"

The doctor savagely glared at him.

Just then Ruric beheld his father behind the doctor's back, and he was suddenly struck with an idea.

"He wants me to keep still!" thought the boy. "It is a good plan. The doctor is sly and I must be cunning to outwit him. I'll throw him off his guard, and when I have a favorable opportunity I'll come back and liberate my father!"

"Well," growled the doctor, angrily, "what are you planning?"

"Nothing at all," said Ruric, simulating a more cheerful and amiable exterior. "I have concluded that I may have been fooled by a fancied resemblance and a cute lunatic, after all."

The doctor, with a nod of approval, "If course you were. You might have set a most dangerous incurable free. Think of the consequence: He might have killed every one of us. Go in and talk to your mother—I know she will convince you that you have been deceived. I must go downstairs again."

The boy redded and walked away, while Crane called a keeper.

"Watch that boy till he's in the room with his mother, then let him be," said the physician. "The key is on the outside of the door. Then take No. 11 to cell No. 7 in the cellar. I want you downstairs to have the woman taken down. Warn her hands not to let the boy know where the man has gone, and that the woman has been recaptured. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," replied the keeper.

The doctor then went down to the floor below, and the boy followed him, and conveying Godfrey Grue into a dark dungeon by a back staircase.

Reaching the lower floor, the doctor encountered the keeper who had captured the woman down by the river.

The woman was screaming and raving, and

standing back against the wall, in the clutches of two burly men.

The doctor then glanced at the doctor, and a look of fury assailed her, and she strove with superhuman strength to break away from her captors and get at him.

"Don't let her get away, boys," grimly said the doctor. "I must get it at any hazard. Tear every rag off her body, if necessary."

The brutal keepers were ruthless in the way in which they attacked the poor creature, and although they searched her thoroughly, not a vestige of the paper she had stolen from the doctor could they find.

"No, no, no!" cried the woman, quivering with excitement, as she wrestled in the strong grasp of her captors. "You cannot get it! You cannot get it! Ha! ha! ha! I have balked your design, Caleb Crane! I have thwarted your plans, you fiend in human form! It is hidden—safely, safely hidden! Do you hear me? Ho! ho! ho! Hidden, hidden, hidden, safely—well—where you can never, never get it. Ho! ho! ho!"

"Comforted her, she has talked me!" loudly roared Caleb Crane, "but I shall wring an avowal of the truth from her lips, if I have to torture her to death in order to find it. Away with her—down in the dungeon with her—take her to No. 4, and by heavens I shall force a confession of the paper, hiding-place from her!"

Hardened and brutal as the keepers were, they glanced at each other and shuddered at mention of taking the poor woman down to that cell, for they knew what that meant!

They were dragging her, screaming, away, when there came a ring at the door-bell, accelerating their movements, and causing a dark frown to appear on Caleb Crane's brow.

He was obliged to forego accompanying them, and as they disappeared down a gloomy flight of stairs, with him, the keeper admitted a man to see the physician about taking a patient.

Caleb Crane's institution was a profitable one, and he had an excellent business there since he started the madhouse.

The building itself was an old Revolutionary structure, which had been occupied by a certain order of Jesuit priests when he bought it; and finding it hardly large enough for his purpose, as his business grew, he had it enlarged piecemeal, until at last it assumed its present proportions.

Having rid himself of his father, he went down to the dungeon, when a furious ring at a bell in the office summoned him upstairs to his wife's apartments.

He hastily answered the call, pulled open the door on the outside, and pocketing the key.

"Why, Caleb," said his bride, in surprised tones, "what ailed the door? I tried to open it and it seemed to have been locked!"

"Poch, pooh, my dear," blandly said Crane. "It was stuck in the jam. I must have a carpenter fix it to-day. It opened rather hard just now, I noticed. Did you want to come out?"

"No, Caleb, but Ruric here wished to go out," she replied. She was a sweet and gentle-looking woman, and seemed to entertain the most profound affection for the boy.

Ruric smiled when the doctor entered, and then said:

"Doctor, as you are now my stepfather, will you please write to my old professors for me, saying you and my mother are satisfied with what they have done for me. It is most singular, as you were always an elegant writer, but I declare your chirography was strangely changed; you inscribed the letters terribly, the spelling was awful, and at last you gave it up in despair. Of course, if you hurt your hand as you said, you cannot do as I asked."

Mrs. Crane looked at her husband, and he glanced at her in a peculiar manner, which the boy did not observe.

The doctor readily consented, though, and after the letter was written, the boy took it, saying he was going to the village to post it, and left the room and descended the stairs.

When he got down in the lower hall he paused near the door of one of the keepers' rooms, his attention being arrested by what he heard two of the men saying inside the apartment.

"Yair, Bill, I caught her down by ther river ter-day, an' Jim an' me brung her in here, an' tuck her down in ther dungeons."

While the boy was listening, he heard the doctor's voice, who the boy was trying to get out of his cell. He's in No. 7. The old feller don't want the boy to know anything about it, neither."

"And I brung ther woman to No. 4."

"Oh, ho! The torture cell, eh?"

I reckon ther ole cove's a-goin' ter make her howl!

"Certain he was, an' nigh caught her, on'y she slipped o'er ther fence, an' got away from him right smart, she did."

"Why," muttered Ruric, in amazement, "they have caught the unfortunate being I believed to be my mother, and have put her down in the cellar. Fortune favors me. And my poor father is down there, too! Now is my chance! I'll slip down there and liberate my father. Then we can get the woman out, and if she is my mother—but, pshaw! how can she be? I just left my mother up in her room, smiling and happy."

He hurried through the hall, and taking a candle from a rack with some matches, he went down to the vaults.

A broad flight of stairs led to the cellars, and an arched passage, damp, cold, and reeking with filth and vermin, met his view.

There were a dozen iron-barred cells opening on this passage, and by the aid of his candle he located No. 7.

"Father!" he cried, running to the door.

"Oh—Ruric! Thank heaven! Is it you, my boy?" cried the man in the cell, as he rushed to the door and peered out through the bars.

"Ay! And I am here to release you!" cried the boy.

The door was bolted on the outside and he opened it.

Godfrey Gruesome stepped out in the corridor, and Ruric rushed off to the cell numbered four, held up his candle and peered in.

There crouched the mad woman he sought, her back turned toward him, muttering incoherently to herself in low tones.

"Ruric! Ruric!" cried the man, in startled tones.

"What is it?" demanded the boy, in alarm.

The woman turned around just then and glared at him fiercely.

He was startled frightfully, for it was his mother's face he saw!

"Fly!" thrillingly cried his father, in smothered, frantic tones. "Look there!"

"The doctor and two keepers approaching with a lantern!" gasped the boy.

"He may kill you for venturing to do this!" muttered his father.

Ruric hastily extinguished his candle and glided over to his father's side, watching the approaching light and men in alarm.

He hardly dared guess what his fate would be if they caught him there liberating his father from the dungeon.

CHAPTER X.

CELL NO. 4.

No. 4, down in the madhouse dungeon, wherein the woman crouched whom Ruric saw by the light of his candle before he extinguished it, was a torture-chamber!

He had known it well, but surmised that there was something wrong about it from what he heard the two keepers saying in the doctor's office.

He had the letter clutched in his hand which the doctor had written to his old professors at Albany, as he joined his father in the dark corridor outside of cell No. 7, to where Godfrey Gruesome stepped when Ruric unlocked his cell door.

The man was manacled hand and foot, though.

They watched the lantern carried by the doctor, as Crane approached with the two keepers, and saw that Ruric could not escape by retracing his steps, for they were at the entrance to the damp, dirty and gloomy corridor just then.

Crane might injure the boy if he discovered him liberating his father, and what to do the boy did not know for a moment; to remain inactive, though, meant exposure!

The boy's mind was queerly thrilled over the fact of his writing the letter she attempted so badly, her spelling being so different from that nice style which he had learned in school.

He had no time to speculate over this just then, for the doctor and his two keepers were approaching, and their lanterns showed that they were bent upon forcing the door of the cell which had hidden the prisoner, which the doctor had called the cell of Benjamin H. Bings, the schemer.

"Come with me!" gasped his father.

"Of concealment!"

He rushed to the door, and peered through the bars, and saw the doctor and his two keepers.

He saw the doctor and his two keepers, and saw the doctor and his two keepers.

the cell, and came to a pause in front of it, holding up the dull-glowing lantern, so that its rays fell upon the iron bars.

There was a wretched iron cot in the cell.

The moment Ruric got in he lightly got on to it and drew the covers over his body, concealing himself.

Godfrey Gruesome remained at the door.

He clutched the bars with his manacled hands, and glared out at the newcomers in a baleful manner.

"Ah!" said the doctor, upon catching sight of him. "You are there, are you, my boy? I hope you are pleased with your quarters."

"Rascal!" exclaimed the man, grating his teeth. "You shall not keep me confined here long."

"By Jiminy!" suddenly interrupted one of the keepers, in startled tones, as he pointed at Gruesome's cell, "looker there."

The prisoner started, and his face blanched.

"The door is unlocked, by Jove!" gasped the doctor.

Godfrey Gruesome's heart sank like lead in his bosom.

"Our plan is frustrated!" he muttered.

He was just about to fling the iron door open, spring out and attack them, in a mad hope of getting away.

But before he could accomplish his design, the other keeper sprang forward, and "click" went the bolt.

The door was securely locked.

Ruric was made a prisoner with his father.

The doctor's yellow eyes snapped and sparkled, and a jeering laugh pealed from his lips, as he cried:

"Defeated, Godfrey Gruesome! You cannot escape me now!"

"You villain! Then at last you acknowledge I am Godfrey Gruesome?"

"Oh, yes! You can do me no harm by knowing the truth. Marie Montmedy saw your photograph in your wife's bed-chamber at her cottage once, and acknowledged to me that you were the original of the picture, when you threw off your disguise as 'Dan,' the hired man," said Crane.

Godfrey Gruesome kicked the cot to call Ruric's attention.

But the boy had overheard every word, and a thrill shot through him as he realized that it was now proven beyond a doubt that the man was really his father.

"And knowing this," proceeded the prisoner, gloomily, "you had the audacity to make an effort to marry my wife!"

"True. In fact, she is now my wife, by Jove!"

"Your wife?"

"We were married to-day."

"What! Oh, but it was bigamy."

"Not at all!" interrupted the doctor, blandly. "In eleven years you have neither lived with her nor supported her, and less time than that is requisite to annul your marriage in this State. Hence, she was free to marry whom she chose."

Godfrey Gruesome uttered a groan, for he knew that this was true; and Ruric felt a deep sense of relief creep over him to learn that his mother had not crumpled herself in any way by marrying the doctor.

The doctor then walked away without uttering another word, and crossing the corridor to No. 4, Gruesome saw him. Bill and Hank open the door and pass inside.

The only light to be seen now was what rays streamed out on the corridor between the iron bars of the cell door.

Ruric arose and, throwing off the covers from the cot, he went to the door and joined his father.

He was just about to whisper something when Godfrey Gruesome made a warning gesture, and pointed out into the gloomy corridor before the cell.

Ruric glanced out and was startled to see Marie glide into view, her figure looking dim and shadowy in the gloom.

She held her notebook and pencil in her hand, and as she crouched silently down in front of Gruesome's cell, they saw that she was intent upon taking down all she heard said, in shorthand.

The doctor and his assistant were in a gloomy vault, made of large blocks of stone, in which some rings of rusty iron were welded in the left-hand wall and in back.

There was an iron cot at the extremity, and the mad woman had thrown herself upon it, when they came in in a paroxysm of fear and fury.

But she was not as violent as she had been, for in the lapse of the week, since which Marie had given her the doctor's terrible concoction of chloral hydrate, cocculus, atropa, belladonna, and dhatocra, the effect began to wear off.

Indeed, the French woman before that had systematically been dosing her with different ingredients of the drug for a long time past, and when the final decoction was administered it served to achieve the climax the doctor had been preparing her for.

Very few persons have seen the doctor and his assistant.

woman's reason gradually began to return, and the faculties which had been shattered resumed their functions.

This was a result the doctor was aiming at.

The poor creature recognized him with a shudder as he entered, and the diabolical expression on his face told her that he contemplated mischief toward her.

The two keepers stationed themselves near the closed door, with a lantern, and the doctor walked on to her side.

"Do you recognize me?" he demanded, roughly.

His practiced eyes told him the state she was in plainly.

"Yes," came the trembling reply, "you are Doctor Crane. Hullo! ho!" she added, with a sudden burst of lunacy. "I know you."

Then she crouched back against the cot again in a fit of trembling.

"He resembles a lunatic now, by Jove!" mused the doctor. "Lunatics have lucid intervals—idiots are born with a radical intellect—an imbecile is of weak, impotent mind. But she—is a lunatic."

He glanced at her furtively an instant, and then added:

Where is the paper you signed which you stole from me?"

There came a sudden glimmer in the woman's eyes, and a cunning expression flitted over her face.

"I don't know," she replied. "I don't know—I don't know."

Then she began to laugh softly to herself, mutter incoherently, and as she clutched at her cropped hair saliva began to flow from her mouth and a queer look to enter her eyes.

"You lie!" exclaimed Crane, angrily. "You lie! Tell me where you have hidden it, or, by heavens, I'll force you to!"

He struck her a terrible blow with his clenched fist as he uttered this threat, knocking her from the cot across the cell, and her body struck the wall with a bang.

She began to laugh and cry alternately, meantime protesting with one breath that she did not know where she put the paper, and with the next defying him and saying that he would never force her to tell.

It was a heart-rending sight, but the men were used to it. Springing upon her with beastly ferocity, the little doctor seized her by the throat as she was arising and bore her over her back on the flagstones.

"Tell me, tell me!" he yelled. "I will have no nonsense from you. Do you hear, tell me, or——"

He had hold of her neck so tightly that the shriek which came to her lips ended in a gurgling, gasping moan.

Nodded to the two men, they set the lantern down, and stepping forward, they tied the struggling woman to one of the rusty iron rings in the wall with a piece of rope, by her elbows, and drawing out her arms, held her hands.

The doctor dug his thumb-nail under the nail of her first finger on the right hand, and she screamed aloud with the agonizing agony thereby produced, her body convulsively quivering, and her eyes starting from her head.

"Mercy!" she shrieked. "Oh, heaven! This is

Will you confess?" hissed the doctor, sardonically.

"Oh, I do not know where I put it!" she wailed.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Crane, furiously. "Strip her!"

Two brutal keepers tore the shawl and waist off her, and Hank produced a rope's-end.

A Russian knout was a more formidable-looking instrument of torture, for each strand was tipped with a piece of lead.

"Pitiful heaven! let me be!" cried the unfortunate woman, wildly, as she made a furious but vain endeavor to get free.

"No! I'll kill you if you don't confess!" hoarsely

A fit of madness overcame the tortured creature just then, and she burst into a wild peal of maniacal laughter, that rang wildly through the gloomy vault, awakening a dozen echoes.

The doctor's clean-shaven face grew purple.

He made a savage gesture, and the keeper who held the woman began to belabor the woman upon the back.

The instrument was wielded by a heavy, strong and mercurial arm, and each brutal blow raised a great inflamed

white skin of the poor creature, and as the blows came down upon her back, she screamed and

the flesh.

The doctor gazed on indifferently, repeating his

and again, for the paper.

The keeper came to a pause from sheer exhaustion.

It was fortunate he did, for his victim was on the verge of fainting.

"Tain't no use!" he growled. "Yer kain't make her own up."

The doctor was furious, but relentless.

"Then, by Jove, she shall sign another!" he exclaimed, hoarsely.

"Anything! Anything!" groaned the poor woman. "Oh, this is too much—too much! You will kill me! You will kill me!"

Foreseeing that he might be disappointed of discovering the paper, Crane had provided himself with another, which differed a little from the first, and he now drew it out of his pocket.

Bill had pen and ink, and they loosened the woman's arms.

She was then ordered to affix her signature, under promise to be left alone if she complied; and with a remarkably firm hand she inscribed the name "Julie Gruesome" at the bottom.

The doctor glanced at the chirography by the lantern light, and a look of ineffable joy crossed his face as he saw that there could be no denial of that name or handwriting.

Then he flung the woman on the cot, muttering:

"Good! good! The game is in my hands now! I must get Marie to witness it, and to-night when this creature gets her food it will contain enough of the drug to craze her again. Securely locked in here she will remain a prisoner all the rest of her life, no one the wiser, and I—I successful in my plan!"

He left the cell with the keepers.

The moment he was gone the mad woman got up from the cot.

"I know not what that paper said," she muttered, "nor do I know what your game is, Caleb Crane, but I do know that you are the cause of all my misery now, and that you would not imprison me here without a reason—a potent reason, too! The blank horror of that subtle nightmare I passed through is gone. I feel as if a cloud was suddenly lifted from my brain. I know all that passed, and yet it was like a dream. There is but one cause. I have been drugged! I have been crazed. Still all the while I have known what has passed. I knew how wildly I acted. I remember you taking me from my home—carrying me here—how I was forced to sign that paper—how I stole it—escaped—and at last I set my cottage on fire—warned Ruric—fled—met you—fought, and in the end was recaptured. But the paper is safely hidden—I know where—and, with what I have just discovered, I shall balk your plot most cunningly!"

And as she spoke she crept over to the back of the cell, and grasping one of the rusty iron rings welded in the wall with both hands, she gave it a turn, and pushed against the large, flat stone to which it was fastened.

The stone swung back like a door, disclosing a dark passage in the wall, from which a cold, damp draught came.

"How fortunate I remembered the history of this old Revolutionary building!" she whispered. "How well I remembered that it was the abode once of the priests—and that its secret passages were discovered by my husband when he was with me. Godfrey told me all. And now I can escape from here and turn the tables on you, Caleb Crane! Farewell, my prison—den of horrors—place of loathing! Farewell! May your dark and gloomy walls never again contain so unfortunate a being as I am, for I have almost seen the last of you now. Farewell!"

And as a great sigh proceeded from her lips, she passed through the yawning opening, the secret door of stone swung back in its place, and she vanished in the mysterious passage that was destined to lead her to the culmination of a design she had schemed out in her tortured mind.

CHAPTER XI.

A NIGHT'S MYSTERIOUS HAPPENINGS.

Marie Montmedy glided away from near the door of cell No. 4 when she heard the doctor preparing to leave, and Ruric and his father were shuddering with horror at the awful cries of the doctor's hapless victim.

But they could not help her any, for they were securely locked in, yet they overheard all that passed.

When the physician, Bill and Hank emerged from the cell of torture with their lantern, Ruric and his father were wondering what the object was Crane had in trying to secure that paper—what its contents were, and who his helpless victim in No. 4 was.

The boy was just upon the point of creeping back into the cot again, when the door was suddenly flung open, the light of a lantern flashed into the cell and he was exposed.

"Ruric!" gasped the startled doctor, recoiling, aghast.

"I may as well own up. I am here, and overheard all," said the boy, boldly, as he darted out of the cell.

Bill slammed the door shut again.

"You—were going—to—the village—to—post—the—letter—to—your—school?" gasped the doctor, in jerky tones, as he seized the boy by the arm.

"So I was. I altered my mind, though, and came down here instead, Doctor Crane," he replied, defiantly. "Let me go!"

"You young scoundrel, how dared you?"

"Oh, I know now from your own confession that this man is really and truly my father, and I was going to set him at liberty, when you entered and spoiled my plan."

"By Jove! your audacity will cost you dearly!" fumed Crane, as he violently shook the boy.

"Oh, what can you do to me?" scoffed Ruric.

"You shall see! Just wait—you shall see! Bill, just take this fellow upstairs and lock him up in a cell. He is demented—absolutely demented!"

Ruric turned pale in the face.

"What!" he cried, indignantly. "Would you dare try to make me out a lunatic now, in order to make me a prisoner?"

"My dear boy," coolly said the doctor, "there is no denying the deplorable fact that you are a little off in your upper story. Just review the evidence you have shown. You have publicly said you were haunted. You unreservedly avowed on several occasions that an escaped lunatic from this establishment was your mother, when you knew very well that your mother is as sane as you are. In fact, you have woven such a web of evidence around yourself that I can prove by many witnesses that you are crazy, and consequently incapable of taking care of yourself. Therefore, I must take care of you. My lawyer—Mr. Bings—has instructions to make me your legal guardian, now that I am your stepfather, and as such I must control your further actions, lest you injure both yourself and others about you."

"Doctor Crane, you are doing this with some rascally motive."

"Am I? There, there—don't rave. Come, Bill, take the poor little demented fellow away. It is too bad, I know, and I feel sorry for him from the bottom of my heart. But what is to be done under the circumstances? Nothing but look out for the unfortunate child's welfare. Take him up to Ward B—cell No. 10, Bill. Take him away, my boy."

And before Ruric could remonstrate or fight against it, Bill caught hold of him, and he was dragged away.

"Oh, if I only had my liberty!" shouted Godfrey Gruesome, in tones of fury, "you would regret this, Caleb Crane!"

The doctor glanced at the iron-barrad door, behind which the man stood, and laughed outright, crying sibilantly:

"No danger, though, of that, Godfrey Gruesome—no danger of that. You will never leave that cell until you are a corpse."

Then he followed the two men away, leaving Gruesome muttering threats against him from within the cell. Bill dragged the unwilling boy through the cellar, up the stairs into the asylum, then up on the second floor.

"Mother! Mother!" shouted the boy as he passed her room. The door was flung open and the lady appeared.

"Why, Ruric, my son, what is the matter?" she asked.

"They are going to lock me up—the doctor says I am crazy."

"Oh—come along with me!" roughly interposed Bill.

Just then the physician appeared, caught his wife by the arm, and despite her protestations he led her into her room, and made a gesture to Bill to go on with Ruric.

The boy saw that resistance would do no good, so he accompanied the keeper docilely, confidently expecting that his mother would argue the doctor out of his spitefulness and secure his release from the cell at once.

But after he was thrust into the cell he remained there all night without the lady showing any sign of having him released; and the alarmed impression grew upon his mind that perhaps the doctor convinced his mother that he was crazy.

His actions and remarks of late had not been rational, and he knew that he might have to undergo a medical examination now to verify the truth or falsity of the doctor's charge against him of lunacy.

Both he and his father prisoners, and at the mercy of such an unscrupulous man as Caleb Crane was, he had not much hope of a future happiness now.

It was patent that the doctor wanted to keep his father's existence a secret—probably on account of his marriage with his bride, and Ruric's impression concerning himself was that the doctor knowing he was aware of his villainy, wanted to put him where he could not make it public!

It made the boy feel very despondent.

made his way downstairs to his office.

The woman followed him, and when they were alone and the door closed and locked the doctor said, gleefully:

"I've got another paper signed by the woman, Frenchy."

"Vell, monsieur, an' vot eez zat?" replied Marie.

"The woman would not confess to the hiding-place of the paper she signed, and then stole from me, by Jove! You recollect how I had to hold her hand to trace the name so that you could have no scruples against swearing to it?"

"Yais—yais. An' zen?"

"Well, as I could not get the paper, I had another ready. It makes me guardian of the boy. It gives me power of attorney to act in behalf of both Ruric and my wife."

"An' so goed ze othair papair, monsieur."

"True. But there is a new clause in this document which the other did not contain. I have locked the boy in a cell, charging him with being insane. You know how he has been raving about seeing his mother in two places at once, and so on? That is enough proof for any jury to declare him insane. He has openly acknowledged that he is a haunted boy, in fact, and now for the point at issue. You know James Forrester left one-third of his fortune to Ruric and two-thirds to the boy's mother?"

"Yais—so I 'ave eet written een in my book vat Meester Beengs say."

"Well, then, Frenchy, here is the idea: According to law lunatics are not allowed to handle fortunes, and their signature to legal documents is invalid. By proving Ruric to be insane, and as his mother is named his guardian until he is twenty-one, she will get the whole fortune in her own hands, and I in turn get control of it as her power of attorney. Don't you see? My wife is perfectly willing to this arrangement going through. And now, as I have a real, genuine, unforged signature of this paper, I want you to accompany me to a notary public with my wife, and with your signature to it, swear to the paper. You can vouch for the way Ruric has been acting and talking of late, can't you? Well, that is enough."

"An' ze five sousand dollair you promised me, sair?"

"Shall be forthcoming the moment this estate is settled up."

"Zen, monsieur, ze papair I sign, an', by gar, I readily meek ze affidavit to vot ze boy say about being haunt."

The doctor chuckled gleefully, rubbed his hands together, and with a nod of approval saw Marie sign the paper.

Then he called up the cook from the kitchen, gave him the vial Marie had used on Ruric and his mother, told the man to put four drops of the medicine in the breakfast to be sent down to cell No. 4 next morning by the negro who brought the incurables their meals, and the man promised to attend to the matter, as he did with other patients.

When he was gone the doctor, his wife, and Marie left the madhouse and drove to the village.

It was pitch dark when they returned, supper was partaken of, and then the doctor went away to go to New York.

He wanted to put the paper in the hands of his lawyer at once, and transact some other business that night, and as he could not very well return to Irvingdale till next morning, he told his wife not to expect him.

It was on the nine o'clock train he left, and after he was gone Marie and her mistress retired to Mrs. Crane's private apartments on the second floor.

They consisted of a magnificent suite of rooms in one of which Marie slept, adjoining her mistress' room.

Marie sat talking to her mistress an hour or more, and then retired to her room, as Mrs. Crane complained of feeling unwell.

The madhouse keeper's wife soon extinguished the light and went to bed, while Marie, after reading her shorthand book through, laid it upon the table in her own room, and with the gas-jet turned low, followed her mistress' example.

It was perhaps an hour after that when a panel in the coted wall in Mrs. Crane's room slid open, and the woman from cell No. 4 peeped into the room.

Then she softly glided through the aperture, passed sw through the apartment, out into the silent hall, and into Ward B, where she eyed the doors of the cells as she hastened along.

Pausing before No. 10, she unbolted the door and went inside, where Ruric lay fast asleep on a cot.

She shook him by the shoulder, and with a startled cry the boy bounded to his feet, glaring at her in the obscurity of the wild, bewildered way for an instant.

She had overheard what passed down in the dungeon!

When the doctor, Ruric, had been securely locked up in cell No. 7, down in the dungeon of the madhouse, she had passed into the doctor's room, and therefore knew just where to look for the boy.

Before Ruric could utter a word, though, she fled from his cell, leaving the door standing wide open as a sure indication that she designed his escape; and ere he could step out of the cell she had flashed back into the doctor's room.

Closing the door, she glided into Marie's room.

The French woman was fast asleep on the bed, but her notebook caught the woman's eyes and, with a start, she eagerly seized it from the table, assured herself of what it was, and then hid it in her pocket.

Marie was losing a veritable treasure to herself, for that book contained a minutely detailed account of everything in connection with the doctor's mysterious schemes.

Then the woman returned to the doctor's room, closed Marie's door, securely locked it, and approached the bed.

The room was now cast in impenetrable darkness since the faint glow from Marie's room was shut off.

The sleeping woman was suddenly and roughly seized, started up, but the cry that arose to her lips was smothered the next instant by the hand of the man woman choking her.

A terrible struggle then took place in the dark room, hardly a sound being made, and then there came an ominous silence, until something fell from the bureau on the floor.

It sounded like a pair of scissors, but no light was thrown on the object, and only a soft, rustling noise followed.

The night wore on slowly and silently in the room.

When daylight came the door opened and Ruric entered.

His mother lay in bed, pale and ghastly, and Marie sat beside her, binding a wet rag around her head.

She was evidently very sick, and the boy uttered a sharp cry, and ran toward her, throwing himself on his knees at her bedside.

He had gone to his room, but could not sleep all night, wondering whose shadowy figure it was that had been in his cell, haunting him, as he had not seen the face or figure of the woman in the darkness.

But he imagined it was his mother—haunting him again.

At last, though, had he reached the bedside when the doctor entered.

Seeing the boy, he uttered a cry of rage, and springing upon Ruric, flung him away from the bedside.

He raised his fist to strike the boy, when he was startled by hearing a clear, ringing voice behind him cry, sternly:

"Hold, Caleb Crane! Don't you dare strike that boy!"

A wild cry of alarm escaped Crane's lips as he glanced around.

In the doorway stood Godfrey Gruesome—free!

CHAPTER XII.

A VAIN STRUGGLE.

Ruric was much amazed to see his father standing in the doorway of the doctor's room.

Godfrey Gruesome had been securely locked up in cell No. 7, down in the dungeon of the madhouse.

Yet not only was he now free, but he had been relieved of the shackles with which he had been manacled.

Marie rushed to her feet as Ruric threw himself upon his knees at the side of his sick mother's bed, very much startled at the entrance of the boy.

Although her room-door had been locked by the mad woman the night before, when she arose it was open again, and no trace of the struggle her mistress had with the doctor's mysterious patient was visible.

But Marie, when she entered the room, had looked under the bed, and failed to find it after a long search.

She had not been surprised to find Ruric's mother sick, for, as it will be remembered that the doctor's wife had been ill for some time.

On receiving Godfrey Gruesome's sharp order, the doctor rushed to his side while in the very act of striking Ruric, and his smooth-shaven face blanched with surprise. He turned back, glaring at Godfrey Gruesome, his yellow face livid, and his small figure quaking with dread.

Godfrey Gruesome, out of cell No. 10, in Ward B, was a mystery to all, and he at once imagined that both father and son had been freed by the same person.

He had not been surprised to find Ruric's mother sick, for, as it will be remembered that the doctor's wife had been ill for some time.

He had not been surprised to find Ruric's mother sick, for, as it will be remembered that the doctor's wife had been ill for some time.

"Free—both of them—free!" gurgled the doctor, in horror. Then he glanced at the ghastly face of his wife, with increasing alarm, and demanded of Marie, in hoarse tones:

"What is the matter with your mistress, woman?"

"Oh, Mon Dieu! She ver' seek vas taken, vile you away to ze ceety vos, monsieur. I lose mine leetle notebook, an' zere eez Rureek an' ze mans, both get free!" replied Marie.

The doctor glanced from one to the other, like a cornered animal that knows it must fight hard for freedom.

Godfrey Gruesome stepped into the room, and locking the door on the inside, he put the key in his pocket.

Seeing this the madhouse keeper's fear increased.

"Father!" cried Ruric, in glad tones. "Oh! You are free!"

"Ay, my boy," replied Godfrey Gruesome, fixing a baleful glance upon the doctor, "and I have got that viper just where I want him, too! We will have an accounting now!"

"In heaven's name," cried the sick woman, starting up in bed, frantically, "do not fight in here!"

Godfrey Gruesome cast a look of contempt at her.

She looked dreadful—her eyes were bloodshot, her face drawn and haggard, as if from excessive suffering, her hair sadly disarranged, and her white night-dress was torn.

"As for you," said Gruesome, in bitter tones of reproach, "I see you are sick, and unfit to witness a scene of violence. But let me tell you, madam, that you deserve but little compassion of me, after not only denying I am your rightful husband, but also for linking your life with that of this inhuman fiend, well knowing I was alive and near you."

"Spare her now, father!" reproved Ruric, sympathetically, as he hurried to the bedside, and flung his arm around the sick woman's neck. "She is very, very ill, aren't you, my poor mother? Oh, but how you have changed in one night!"

"My darling son!" sobbed the weeping woman, as she kissed Ruric again and again. "Oh, I feel so distressed—so forlorn!"

"Well," interposed the doctor, with great calmness, as he faced Godfrey Gruesome, "how did you get free, may I ask?"

"That is none of your business!" sharply replied the other. "Let it suffice that I am out of your power, and that our hour of reckoning has arrived."

"Indeed!" sneered the physician.

"We are on equal footing now," proceeded Gruesome, forcibly, "and I demand to know what villainy you were scheming that led you to marry my wife?"

"Oh! You do, eh? Then I shall tell you. But before I do so I advise you to return to your cell in the dungeon, for it does not suit my plans to have you running around here loose, as you might cause me some trouble."

He pointed at the door.

But maddened at him as Gruesome was, he shouted:

"No! no! Never again shall you imprison me. Speak! Confess, you fiend, or I will throttle you where you stand!"

In a fury, he sprang at the doctor, his fingers working convulsively, and a terrible look in his eyes.

But just as he arrived within a yard of Caleb Crane, the rascal whipped a revolver from his hip-pocket and pointed it directly in Gruesome's face!

Uttering a cry of consternation, the man halted suddenly.

Then he threw up his arms and recoiled a step.

A low, mocking laugh peeled from the doctor's lips.

"Startled, eh?" he chuckled. "I thought so! Now produce that key and open the door, do you hear? Open the door and march ahead of me back to your cell! March in double-quick time, too, or by the powers I'll fire at you!"

A gasping cry escaped Gruesome's lips.

"Defeated!" groaned he, in despair.

Looking down the muzzle of that grim revolver was far from pleasant, as the doctor kept it poked in his face only a few feet from his brain, and the shrewd, determined little wretch had his finger upon the trigger.

"Defeated? Well, now, I should say so," acquiesced Crane, with a sarcastic smile. "You are as completely in my power now as if safe in your cell, my boy. That is very evident. Unlock the door, I say, and travel! I wouldn't hesitate an instant to fire at you, and to tell the truth you'd be far better off in your coffin just now than intruding here to mar the tranquillity of my mind."

Godfrey Gruesome stared sullenly at him. His gaze wandered over to Ruric and his mother, and then his hands dropped to his side as a dejected look stole over his face.

"I am at your mercy, unarmed," he replied in a frenzy of excitement, "but you shall not consign me to that tomb without a struggle, you cur!"

And snatching up a chair from the floor, he raised it over his head to hurl it at his enemy.

As the door would fly open, though, there sounded a sharp report, and the doctor's arm was hurled aside from in front of him. He was stunned.

The doctor, seeing the mark, the doctor uttered an exclamation of anger, both the women screamed, and as Ruric rushed toward the doctor, his father dared not hurl the chair for fear of hitting the boy by accident.

He lowered it, and as the physician turned upon Ruric for interfering the boy grappled him, and endeavored to wrench the weapon from his hands.

Instantly they were struggling on the floor.

Godfrey Gruesome ran to his son's assistance.

They both fell upon the doctor on the floor, and a terrific fight ensued, just as a loud bang came at the door, delivered by the keepers, who had been brought to the spot by the pistol shot.

Marie ran to the door and told them to burst it in, as the doctor was getting killed; while the sick woman in the bed covered her face with her trembling hands to shut out the sight of the struggle from her vision.

There came a crash as the lock was burst open.

It rushed in, and the doctor's arm was hurled aside.

One glance showed them the state of affairs in the room. The doctor was on the floor, and the boy was on his feet, while one dragged Ruric aside, the other caught hold of Godfrey Gruesome.

For a minute more Ruric and his father were overcome and lay on the floor.

The boy was taken, struggling, back to his cell, and the doctor was carried and laid into a state of insensibility, and lay down in the dungeon again!

Godfrey Gruesome had not availed them in the least, and with a heavy heart and a broken mind they were left locked up, to meditate over their misfortune, while the doctor returned to his wife's room.

Before he entered the room the cook ran up to him, and told him that the woman in the dungeon cell No. 4 had been found dead by the negro, as the doctor, the night before, had ordered.

"She had eaten," said the cook, "all the while demanding to see the doctor, and declaring, in a raving way, that she was the wife of a man who had been killed by the doctor, and as a March hare."

"My little decoction works like a charm," chuckled the doctor, "and I shall take care to have her see the doctor at intervals!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DOCTOR'S WIFE.

As the doctor entered his room, the sick woman lay upon the bed, and the French woman was doing her best to comfort her mistress.

"Oh, doctor, doctor, my dear, my dear," she cried, "do not leave me, do not leave me, do not leave me!"

The doctor, seeing the mark, the doctor uttered an exclamation of anger, both the women screamed, and as Ruric rushed toward the doctor, his father dared not hurl the chair for fear of hitting the boy by accident.

He lowered it, and as the physician turned upon Ruric for interfering the boy grappled him, and endeavored to wrench the weapon from his hands. Instantly they were struggling on the floor. Godfrey Gruesome ran to his son's assistance. They both fell upon the doctor on the floor, and a terrific fight ensued, just as a loud bang came at the door, delivered by the keepers, who had been brought to the spot by the pistol shot. Marie ran to the door and told them to burst it in, as the doctor was getting killed; while the sick woman in the bed covered her face with her trembling hands to shut out the sight of the struggle from her vision. There came a crash as the lock was burst open. It rushed in, and the doctor's arm was hurled aside. One glance showed them the state of affairs in the room. The doctor was on the floor, and the boy was on his feet, while one dragged Ruric aside, the other caught hold of Godfrey Gruesome. For a minute more Ruric and his father were overcome and lay on the floor. The boy was taken, struggling, back to his cell, and the doctor was carried and laid into a state of insensibility, and lay down in the dungeon again! Godfrey Gruesome had not availed them in the least, and with a heavy heart and a broken mind they were left locked up, to meditate over their misfortune, while the doctor returned to his wife's room. Before he entered the room the cook ran up to him, and told him that the woman in the dungeon cell No. 4 had been found dead by the negro, as the doctor, the night before, had ordered. "She had eaten," said the cook, "all the while demanding to see the doctor, and declaring, in a raving way, that she was the wife of a man who had been killed by the doctor, and as a March hare." "My little decoction works like a charm," chuckled the doctor, "and I shall take care to have her see the doctor at intervals!"

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not get out again to frighten me in this manner. I feared our effort to get the boy's money, and all the rest of our plot, was upon the eve of discovery, and that you and I should go to prison for it."

"Oh, how I fear of the doctor! I have got things fixed so that we cannot fail."

"But if they had managed to escape?" asked the doctor.

"Of course it would have been bad for us. You must try to make that boy tractable in future, for he could ruin us."

"I shall try," said the woman. "And now leave me—I am all unstrung—I want to be left alone."

"An' me, madam?" queried Marie.

"You can go, too. A good sleep will quiet my nerves."

The woman was glad to get away, to hunt for her precious shorthand book, so she bowed and withdrew, accompanied by the physician.

As soon as she was alone, she went to the door, unlocked it, and slipped out.

She sprang from the bed, glided to the floor, looked in, as she had done before, and then went to the door, unlocked it, and slipped out.

Hastily donning a wrapper, which lay upon a chair, she slipped out, unlocked the door, and slipped out.

It was Marie's shorthand diary.

She picked it up, and unlocked the door, and slipped out.

She unlocked the door, and slipped out.

The doctor has hatched, now, and he will find himself most strangely balked, when he imagines success is assured! I cannot possibly allow myself to be so unscrupulous to an unusual degree, and would perhaps kill me if he discovers that I play him false. I never yet saw the smartest man, though, who is equal to a woman, when she sets her mind to work to trap him."

Marie unlocked the door, and slipped out.

"And now," she muttered, "while I have the chance, I will commence the first step to thwart the doctor. He imagines I am so unscrupulous to an unusual degree, and would perhaps kill me if he discovers that I play him false. I never yet saw the smartest man, though, who is equal to a woman, when she sets her mind to work to trap him."

Marie unlocked the door, and slipped out.

Swiftly taking a candle from the table she ignited it, entered the dark aperture, closed the door, and found herself in a narrow passage between the walls.

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"Name them, woman, name them."

"I will not say a word of it until I send for you. Besides this, you must promise not to divulge any of its secrets to a living soul outside of its walls until I give you my permission to do so—will you do it?"

"And leave you—my wife—with the fiend who brought me here! Never! No, no, no! I won't do it! Your effort is terribly—"

"Hark! Listen to me, Godfrey Gruesome," interrupted the lady, in low, intense tones. "You are laboring under a great mistake about me. I am not half so wicked as you imagine. Nor do I care for the doctor. On the contrary, I hate, and despise him. But he has instituted a vile plot to cheat me and my boy out of our rights. I must remain here until I discover all the details of his villainy. Then I will go to him and see that he is put in a much-deserved prison. Now you

He uttered a bellow of rage, and the panting Gruesome dashed the door shut and made a dash for the rear stair at which his frightened wife pointed silently.

Hardly had he vanished, when the doctor emerged from the door so suddenly as to collide with his wife, and both fell on the floor just as Ruric came in the hall door, and Marie followed the doctor out into the room.

Ruric's mother arose to her feet, and rushed past the boy out into the hall. But her son saw her.

"Haunted! haunted! haunted!" he cried, hollowly, pointing after her.

That was the veritable mad woman he had seen before, for her hair was shorn and the false hair she had just worn was clutched in her hand, as it had come off when she fell, despite the bandage with which it had been fastened on.

CHAPTER XV.

MARIE JOINS THE ENEMY.

Having been liberated from his cell by the doctor, Ruric had just entered his mother's room in time to see his father escape from the closet; the physician enveloped in the counterpane, clutching Marie, got shoved in in Gruesome's stead, and his mother ran out into the hall.

One glance showed the boy that the hair she held in her hand was false, and that now her head was bared of it, by pulling the bandage she had worn when the doctor knocked her over, her own hair was shorn close.

The doctor had not seen it, though, for he was very much confused by the woman having flung the bed-cover over his head, so her husband could get out of the closet unseen, and escape by the back staircase to the yard.

Marie made a run for the door to get out, but as the doctor caught her she would keep her threat to expose his plot to the authorities, he ran after and caught her.

"Marie! Marie!" he gasped. "Do not be a fool! I was only joking when I told my wife I would send you back to France on a ship. You are too valuable an assistant——"

"No, no, monsieur, I not believe you, sair!" she cried. But he held on to her tightly.

Marie had seen what her mistress did, and beheld Gruesome's escape; but she was so angry over the doctor's admission of treachery, which she overheard, that she did not intend to tell him anything about it.

She had not seen her mistress' shorn head, though, only having had time to see her disappearing out the door, hear Ruric cry out that he was haunted, and see the boy hurry into the hall after his mother.

"I tell you, you are mistaken!" shouted Crane, angrily.

"Well," said the woman, suddenly struck with the idea to liberate him and make her escape while he was off his guard. "You promise me by ze oath zat you veel not do zat, sair?"

"Why, of course," said Crane, seeing her apparently relenting.

"Then, monsieur, I believe you."

"Will you behave yourself now?"

"Certainly, but no more such threats, par bleu!"

"No—no. There is a sensible woman. Here—here are fifty dollars," said Crane, giving her the specified amount eagerly.

"Don't be so rampageous in future. Stay here, will you, for I have hurry down to cell No. 7 and find out how the prisoner came in here and made his escape without even leaving the door of his cell unlocked on the outside, as Hank just said he

did."

"I am here, monsieur."

"Who flung that counterpane over my head?"

"That Rureek, sair. He sink zat you veesh to keel me."

"Where has his mother gone?"

"You ve struggle, sair, she take ze ight an' run out een ze hall."

"Then bring her back to bed, or she may be taken very sick."

"I will, monsieur. Ze poor, poor lady, mon dieu!"

"I will have that broken lock and bolt repaired, so she can stay here after this, undisturbed."

And so saying, Caleb Crane hurried out in the hall.

Neither Ruric nor his mother were visible anywhere, and Marie hurried down to the dungeon, to see for herself how Hank came in here, his mind tortured by a thousand fears, as the doctor said.

But she had no doubt Ruric would be warned by his mother to keep matters concerning Godfrey's disappearance a dead secret, at least for a while.

When he reached cell No. 7 in the dungeon, there came a knock, and, as the man said, the cell was empty, Godfrey

Gruesome's bonds lay upon the floor, evidently cut, and the man was gone.

While the doctor was wondering at the man's mysterious escape, the mad woman in cell No. 4 was glaring out through the iron-barred door, her closely cropped head lending her a most hideous aspect, as she kept yelling at him.

In the meantime Ruric saw his mother run into an empty room at the end of the hall, and he pursued her.

When he got in she stood by the window, as calm and unconcerned as if nothing had occurred.

The hair on her head was evidently undisturbed, the towel was bandaged around her forehead, and she stood glancing out the window in a pensive attitude.

"Mother!" gasped the bewildered boy, pausing in the middle of the apartment. "Mother, in heaven's name, explain this dreadful mystery, or I shall go mad."

"What do you mean, Ruric?" asked the lady, calmly.

"Have you a double, are you possessed of infernal powers, are you a human being or am I indeed mad?"

"My son," said the woman, in tones of sorrow, "you are sane, and I am not endowed with supernatural power."

"But the queer way you appear to me——"

"Is nothing very strange, as you will learn."

"Then let me implore you again to reveal the truth."

"Not yet, Ruric, not yet," replied his mother, with a yearning look in her gentle eyes. "Have patience, my son. Do not torture your mind with the mystery of this terrible madhouse, for its secrets are of a kind that you cannot fathom——"

"But how is it that you at one moment appear to me the incarnation of a tender, loving mother, and next you are a most horrible looking, crazed creature—seen in two places at the same time; one moment having hardly any hair upon your head, the next instant having a luxuriant growth—sometimes repelling me, then again loving me tenderly."

"Ruric, you will soon learn all. Let this suffice. I have been playing a double character to Doctor Crane. He is a villain, and in order to baffle his evil designs, and learn what they are, I am obliged to do as I am doing. It is all for your interest I do it, and the end is fast approaching when I may have him brought to the bar of justice."

"Ah! Then there is some trickery in all these goings on?"

"Certainly, and yet there is a good deal of truth, too."

"Well, if you will not explain now, tell me how I can aid you."

"With all my heart. Conciliate the doctor, offer to keep his secrets, and act as if you wanted to befriend him, for my sake. That will blind him to my motives, and let me work without fear of being balked in a design I have formed."

"I shall do as you say. But my father?"

"He is free. It was I who liberated him!" she cried, softly.

"Ah! That is a revelation to me. It proves your truth."

"Hark! Some one is coming, Ruric."

She held up her finger, enjoining silence, and both listened.

The next moment the door opened and Marie entered.

The French woman glanced curiously at her mistress.

"Mon dieu!" she exclaimed. "So you are 'ere, eh?"

"Come in and close the door. I want to speak to you," said Ruric's mother, sternly. "I want no trifling, either."

"Sairtainly, madam," said the woman, complying.

"You saw all that passed in my room?" questioned the lady.

"Everysing, madam. You gief ze prisonair hees leobairty."

"True. And you are going to desert the doctor, eh?"

"He ees ven rascals, affair all I do for heem, to plot zat 'e

send me away, to geet reed of me."

"It certainly was mean of him. But you must not go away."

"Ah, madam, I value my life too mooch to remain here."

"He promised you five thousand dollars, didn't he? Well,

he will not give it to you. If you will join me—aid me in my

plans, I shall see that you get the amount when he is de-

feated. Mark me, he will injure you yet, if you give him the

chance. As my ally, you will fare better."

The French woman's black eyes sparkled.

She loved intrigue, as most all her nation do.

Seeing a chance to get the money Crane threatened to

swindle her out of, and the opportunity to retaliate on him,

she was not long in assenting to join the lady's cause.

A plan of action was then improvised, and the trio hurried

back to the lady's bedroom, to avoid being caught plotting

by the little doctor, when they heard something the same

disappearance of Godfrey Gruesome, and hurried into the bed-

room.

Marie and Ruric had got out of sight, by retreating into

the French woman's sleeping apartment, adjoining, and the

boy's mother had gone to bed again before the physician entered.

approached the bed, and while Ruric and Marie in the room listened they heard him say:

"My dear, the man is gone, by Jove, and once he informs the authorities of what I did to him I may be arrested."

"What can we do?" queried the lady.

"Rapid work alone can save us. I got another paper signed by the mad woman giving me power of attorney. I'll hear from Bings soon."

"You gave the lawyer the paper, then?"

"Yes. And we will soon have your father's fortune now."

"My father's fortune? Ah! So that is the game?"

"Yes, of course. You know. I told you all about it. And once I am appointed Ruric's guardian I'll make a veritable lunatic of the boy, never fear!"

The listening boy shuddered at this threat. It was the second time the physician said he would do it.

"Make a maniac of him?" queried the woman. "How?"

"Why, the same way I turned his brain once before. You know what effect the medicine has on the woman whom I've got safely locked up in cell No. 4. She was raving dreadfully a few minutes ago, as I had another dose, stronger, if possible, put in her food. I can give the boy some of it once the money is in my hands, and lock him in a cell, where he will be safe enough till he dies."

"What is the medicine? Have you got any of it here?"

"Yes," replied the doctor, drawing the vial from his pocket and handing it to her. "That is the stuff! It is an ingenious mixture of digitalis, belladonna, atropa belladonna and dhatoora. Keep the vial here for future use."

"I shall," said the lady, with a look of grim satisfaction.

"Have you anything to advise about Gruesome?"

"I do not know what to say, Caleb. We must wait until we see what steps he will take."

"A fine state of uncertainty, by Jove!" growled Crane, uneasily.

His anxiety seemed to please the lady, for an exultant look of satisfaction showed her face as she watched him.

The doctor pondered a moment, then he added:

"I am going away to the city. This suspense will drive me wild. If Gruesome informs the police they will raid my house; but if I am not here they can do me no harm. You can apprise me of anything happening by telegraphing to the D— Hotel. Should the man not do me any injury I will return."

"Ruric is at home until tonight."

"No; I will go at once. I cannot stand this waiting, and wondering what fatality is going to occur to me."

"Very well, Caleb."

The doctor then kissed her good-by, gave her some minor instructions, and denning his hat, he went away.

Marie and Ruric then entered the room.

They overheard all that was uttered, and the trio seemed glad that the doctor had gone as he did.

The day passed uneventfully; by, save that Ruric's mother had a long, earnest conversation with Marie, gave the girl her shorthand book back, and then Ruric was sent to the city with a note from his mother to a prominent lawyer.

When night fell the lady attired herself, put a shawl over her head and stole out of the building and across the yard.

Approaching the tool-house, she went between the fence and the tiny building, drew a small stone from the foundation, and out of the aperture thus made she pulled the paper which had been signed on the night the madhouse first contained Ruric's mother.

At the same juncture the door of the tool-house was cautiously opened and the physician thrust out his head, peered about, and then returned.

He had gone to the city at once, wishing to remain upon the premises until nightfall, unbeknown to any one, and see for himself what might transpire.

He was evidently astonished to see the lady there, and more so observing that the paper she clutched in her hand was the one stolen from his pocket on the night Marie's bed was searched.

"At last!" muttered the lady, trembling with excitement. "I can bring this document to some account now to defeat him!"

She looked amazed, crept out and up behind her.

On her shoulder, he snatched the paper away.

"You!" he exclaimed, pocketing it, while the lady

uttering a startled cry, "and I want you,

to come bidden here, and how you

look for it, by Jove!"

CHAPTER XVI.

BEDLAM BREAKS LOOSE.

Caught in the act of unearthing the paper, to sign which the mother of Ruric Gruesome had been maddened by the doctor, the lady became overwhelmed with confusion.

The doctor stood eyeing her distrustfully, then continued: "This is most singular. No one but the mad woman knew where this document was hidden, yet you came here as if you knew all about it. Moreover, I want to know into what account you can now bring the paper, and who it is you are threatening to defeat?"

The lady's agitation increased, and she stammered:

"I thought you went to the city?"

"But I didn't, by Jove, nor has any one come to arrest me."

"True! You startled me dreadfully by your sudden appearance. That is why I am so agitated. Why did you do it?"

"Bosh! Why don't you answer my questions?"

"I have been questioning the mad woman—she told me where she hid the paper. I meant I could bring the paper to some account by handing it over to you, Caleb, to defeat any resistance on the part of the boy, so that our success could be assured."

"Oh," said the doctor, his face clearing, "I see! But you must be much enter than I am, managing to find out where the woman hid the paper. I even went to the extreme of torturing her to bring a confession of what she had done, but she would not admit anything to me."

"Ah, a woman's tact is much shrewder than a man's."

"That is so. I am glad you succeeded. This paper will have been the exposure of me. I'll destroy it now so that it will not avail any one."

And so saying, he drew it from his pocket and tore it to fragments, scattering them on the summer wind.

"Then you are not going to the city?" queried the lady.

"No. I have no fear, since Gruesome has made no move to get into hot water. I can easily find my way to the grounds, and if any one comes he can inform me in plenty of time to get away by the river."

"Then I will return to the house."

"To all intents and purposes, yes. I will go at once and apprise the gateman what to do."

The lady nodded, they separated, and while the doctor went down the gravelled path, Ruric's mother returned to the asylum.

"Defeated!" she muttered as she went in. "Sure of proof of his villainy as I was, I was most unexpectedly thwarted. But he does not suspect me of being opposed to him, nor does he know that Marie has confessed all, and joined issues with me. Within but a short time he will suddenly find himself under arrest. I hope Ruric saw the attorney I wrote to. He will go to Lawyer Bings, and straighten out matters in New York considerably."

Going upstairs, she met the boy in the hall.

"Ah, mother," said he, "I have been looking for you."

"Have you seen the man I sent you to?"

"Yes, indeed."

"What did he say?"

"That we are victims of a conspiracy, and that by this time to-morrow he and Benjamin Bings will have a conversation that will result in Caleb Crane's defeat."

"Good! Now run to your room. The doctor is coming."

As she said this she ran into her own apartment and looked the door, as the lock had been repaired that day.

The doctor was to take up his quarters in another part of the house, but he was not to be bothered by him just then.

The boy heard her lock the door, which, besides the exit leading to the back stairway, was the only means of getting out of the room, and then he walked away toward his own room. He had just passed the head of the stairs when he heard some one coming up.

Pausing and glancing over the balustrade, he saw the dim, shadowy figure of a woman softly ascending.

There was something peculiar about her that caused the boy to stop and watch her until she reached the top.

The hall was dimly lit up, and all objects were but imperfectly to be seen; yet Ruric could distinguish her figure faintly.

She wore a tight-fitting dress and waist, her sleeves were rolled up to the elbows, and a cape was thrown over her head.

"Who can she be, I wonder?" muttered the boy

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CHAPTER XVII.

FIGHTING THE MANIACS.

Ruric and Crane were in a dangerous situation, with all the lunatics of the ward out of their cells, surrounding them.

The entire crowd had piled upon the doctor in a heap in the middle of the corridor, and Crane was pounded, kicked and cuffed, squeezed, rolled and crushed unmercifully.

The furious cries of the liberated maniacs, added to the doctor's shouts for help, rang through the asylum with a dreadful sound, the uproar increasing every moment.

Ruric's position was equally as bad, as the mad woman had him down on the floor of the cell, into which she had dragged him from which it seemed impossible he could get away, in spite of his most violent exertions.

"Great heaven, my mother wants to kill me," groaned the strangling boy, as he tried to fight her off. "This is awful!

the woman, fiercely. "You are my enemy. I shall kill you for it! Oh, I know who you are. We shall win the game yet! We shall have your money! You will become a beggar—a beggar—a beggar, you brat!"

"Mother!" gurgled the boy, his face turning purple, his eyes starting from their sockets, and his lips swelling as his spread fingers clutched at the crazed woman. "Oh, how can you do this? You are killing your own son!"

"My son? Oh, ho! Oh, ho! My son? Bah! You are not my son—not my son! I tell you I have no son. You are my wretch! Die, will you! Ho! ho! ho!"

She chuckled and laughed immoderately, and her grasp upon Ruric's neck tightened until he could not breathe.

Lights began to dance and flash before his strained vision, a loud, humming noise began to ring in his ears, and everything seemed to assume a double shape.

The horribly contorted face of the mad woman kept growing more and more evil expression with which she regarded him seemed to be augmented ten-fold, until she looked like an incarnate fiend:

Ruric's senses were deserting him fast.

and brighter gleamed the fancied lights before his eyes; louder and louder roared the noises in his ears until bigger grew the face and form of the crazed woman.

convulsively writhed, his spread fingers clutched at the floor, and

Upon the verge of losing his senses, he ceased to struggle, her evil features, as she keenly contemplated him.

The furious uproar out in the corridor seemed to have in itself there came a figure into the cell with a rush.

It was one of the madmen.

The moment he saw the woman he sprang at her, knocked her over upon the floor, and they began to fight, with the fury of two demons.

Liberated of that strangling clutch upon his windpipe, Ruric began to gasp for breath, the discoloration left his face, and

increasing noise out in the hall brought his wits to more rapidly, and as he glanced through the door of the cell, he saw that a couple of keepers had arrived upon the scene, attracted there by the loud noise.

ing closed the big door at the entrance to the corridor, so that

ing crowd to rescue the doctor from their midst.

Right and left whistled and hummed the lashes, every blow

then arose to his feet, and securing an extra whip, of the keepers brought with him, the little doctor

at the way they maltreated him, Crane struck many blow that seared the flesh of its recipient, and the unfortunates rushed aimlessly hither and thither to

one of the lunatics thus driven away who ran into

Here and there darted the doctor and the keepers after the

which were soon occupied again, locked up and the corrido

Ruric arose to his feet and walked unsteadily out of the cell,

"Ah! where have you been?" cried Crane, upon seeing the

boy.

"In this cell. The woman is in here fighting an incurable,"

replied the boy. "She nearly choked me to death just now."

"Go in and separate them," said Crane to the keepers.

"Leave the man inside and bring the woman back to cell

No. 4 in the dungeon."

"Yes, sir," said Bill, touching his cap.

"He went down in the dungeon, ten minutes ago," replied

Bill.

"I don't understand how this woman got out, by Jove!"

The two men entered the cell, and after a short struggle with

Ruric glanced keenly at the woman.

"She is certainly my mother," he muttered, doggedly. "I

am not mistaken in her. After the trouble in her room, when

the doctor was trying to lock Marie in the closet, and the false

hair on my mother's head became detached, she was the same

as this woman in looks, voice, actions and indeed everything.

Yet before I pursued this poor creature I heard my mother's

voice in her room, behind my back—before I knew the iden-

tity of this mad woman. Oh, what a maddening, maddening

mystery!"

and the other keeper, they brought the woman back to the

dungeon.

Hank lay on the floor, senseless, the cell door stood open,

and after they thrust the screaming and fighting mad woman

in the cell and locked her up they carried the unconscious

man upstairs to the kitchen and revived him.

He then told them how he had gone to the woman's cell

jug, felled him in the corridor, and thus managed to escape.

Ruric watched the men bringing the woman downstairs, and

own room for the night, when his mother's room door opened.

Upon the threshold stood Mrs. Gruesome.

Calm, collected, her luxuriant hair neatly arranged, and at-

boy.

"Where is Marie?" he asked, presently.

"She has retired to bed."

"Why, certainly. But that noise I heard?"

"A lot of maniacs got free. They are recaptured."

The boy entered the room as he said this and closed the

door.

The lady glanced at him curiously and saw that he was

sulky-looking, and eyed her in a peculiar way, from head to

WHICH IS WHICH?

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Stealing over to a door the boy listened to hear what was said.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DOCTOR'S LITTLE PLAN.

Ruric peeped through the keyhole of the door, and saw the doctor sitting at his desk, while beside him sat the stiff, straight, hollow-eyed lawyer, with his rusty plug hat on, without a smile upon his face.

There was an ugly look in the little doctor's queer, yellow eyes as he watched Mr. Bings, and he was growling:

"I don't like the delay at all, Bings, and I won't put up with it much longer, by Jove—that is all!"

"My Christian friend," observed the lawyer, "as heretofore said, I cannot help it. The second paper you caused to be signed and sworn to before a notary public will give you power of attorney for your second wife and her child, Ruric, the other heir, but I know that the lad is not crazy, as you have just said, and I cannot, as hereinafter will appear, use a false

"You say the boy must act for himself, and that his mother was legally appointed his guardian, eh?"

"True—true, my worthy client."

"Suppose I prove he is incompetent—a raving maniac?"

"If you can do so you could have yourself appointed his legal guardian, as said heretofore. But that would not affect his inheritance in the least. You cannot touch it, my dear sir."

"I can secure my wife's portion for her, though?"

"Doubtless. But can't she secure it herself?"

"Yes, of course, she can."

"Then, my dear sir, she must do so."

"There must be some way, by Jove, to gain control of that part willed to Ruric Gruesome, isn't there?"

"Only his death would leave it to his mother."

"Ha!" exclaimed the doctor.

The tone in which he gave utterance to this word was so sinister as to make the listening Ruric shudder.

"He would kill me, if he dared, in order to rob me," the boy muttered as he peered through the keyhole again.

"With the power of attorney I can act in behalf of my wife and her son; that is beyond all dispute. I want to get the boy's portion in my hands, by Jove, and get it I will if there is any possible means."

"The will," said the lawyer, with a dry cough, "is worded so that if the boy is alive he will inherit, as aforesaid, at legal age. In event of his death his mother will inherit the entire fortune. The boy, as the Latin has it, is homo alieni—under a guardian's control. His mother is the guardian, as hereinafter will appear."

"Then his share cannot be touched until he is twenty-one?"

"Not a cent, my Christian friend, not a cent."

"There is no need of mentioning him any more?"

"None in the least. Finis coronat opus; the end crowns the work."

This was a disagreeable pill for the doctor to swallow.

It made Ruric smile quietly to himself, though, behind the door.

"When can we finish the settlement?" asked Crane, after a pause.

"To-morrow, as heretofore mentioned, I will begin work. Within a week the entire case will be settled. Expect me here to-morrow with a legal friend. He will bring certain documents to be signed by you, as aforesaid, and you must be present with your wife and her son, your witness, the Colonel Marie Montmady, and at 3 P. M. you can look for

"!" said Crane. "I shall look for you, and will be

the long, lank Mr. Bings was taken with a very hard coughing, shot up from his seat like a skyrocket, jerked his plug hat over his eyes by a sudden nod and grasped his

"Remarkable, remarkable!" said he, in amazed tones. "The power of humanity when lubricated by certain ardent

"Remarkable, for instance?" inquired the doctor, smiling.

"For instance," replied the lawyer.

He crossed his arms and winked.

The doctor's eyes were understood.

The doctor produced a bottle and glass, "hookers" were passed, and the lawyer then expressed his intention to return to New York.

The doctor accompanied him to the door.

When he was gone, Caleb Crane returned to his office, sat down, and Ruric heard him mutter in faintly audible tones:

"So there is no way to get the boy's legacy, excepting by his death. That is very awkward, to be sure. I am not a murderer, but I think that I can kill him for awhile, and yet gain mastery of the situation. Now there is bottle No. 37 in my case, which is equally as efficient as No. 44, with which I turned that woman's brain. It contains a very simple compound, but the effect is monstrously fine as I have frequently tested it. Curare—a fine neurotic paralyzant of the motor nerves, which, when it is introduced under the skin acts like chain-lightning. The patient is to all appearances dead, and in reality not far from it, with the spine and heart paralyzed. Indeed, there is only one way to tide the victim over the effect, and that, too, is a delicate operation, by Jove! Yet I am not afraid to risk using it on the boy."

"Oh, but ain't you?" muttered Ruric, with a grimace.

"It will serve my purpose admirably," went on Crane.

"And I won't submit to it!" muttered Ruric.

"I'll use it to-night," said Crane, "and a coroner's inquest would only reveal the fact that he died from paralysis of the heart, from natural causes, and then I can revive him, and bury a mummy—that is, if I don't actually kill him under the operation, by Jove!"

"The deuce you will!" Ruric thought.

"Then," continued Crane, "I can gain possession of his share of the legacy for my wife, and it will fall into my hands afterward."

"I doubt it!" muttered Ruric, grimly.

A moment later the doctor left his office.

Ruric went out of the room, his mind trouble with misgivings over what he overheard.

"That man would not hesitate at any foul means to carry his point!" thought the boy with a shudder, "and I must beware of him. He won't operate his infernal drugs on me if I can help it."

He went to his mother's room and told her what he overheard the doctor and the lawyer saying, and in conclusion he repeated the soliloquy of Crane, whereat the lady looked startled.

She warned the boy to be careful of what he ate and drank, and told him to look out constantly for an unexpected attack.

The boy went out afterwards and had his supper in Irvingdale. Returning to the asylum, he retired to his room.

It was a pleasant bed-chamber near his mother's apartments, furnished very nicely, having two windows, one door and a closet, in the top of which was a scuttle leading to the roof.

He locked and bolted the door leading to the hall, lit the lamp, undressed, and within an hour he went to bed and fell asleep.

The clock on her mantel chimed the hour of ten.

As the last silvery note of the bell ceased, the closet door was pushed open very cautiously and the doctor glided into the room.

By another scuttle he had gained the roof, crossed it to the one over Ruric's room, and thus gained ingress to the apartment.

Ruric had turned the light of his lamp low, and in the dim and uncertain light, the doctor's figure looked shadowy and obscure.

In one hand he held a small sponge saturated with chloroform, and in the other a tiny vial of curare, and a sharp lancet to puncture the sleeping boy's skin, in order to administer the deadly drug.

Creeping stealthily over to the bedside, he hovered over the boy an instant, and then reached out his hand to place the saturated sponge under Ruric's nostrils.

It touched the boy's face—he awoke with a start, but before the doctor could stop him he sprang out of bed.

"Rascal!" cried Ruric. "So you have come to drug me, have you?"

CHAPTER XX.

PREPARING THE TRAP.

Seeing that his plan to chloroform Ruric and administer the fatal drug to the boy was defeated, Crane uttered a cry of rage.

The sponge dropped from his hand, and he hastily thrust the lancet and vial of curare into his pocket.

The open closet door showed Ruric how the man got into the room, for Crane had left the scuttle open.

"He knows what I want to do to him," muttered the doctor, in amazement. "How did he discover it?"

Ruric overheard this remark and replied:

"Yes, I do know that you want to drug me. You want to give me the semblance of death in order to cheat the law out of my inheritance. I'll tell you how I discovered it. When Mr. Bings were talking over the matter of the fortune in your office while I was in an adjoining room. When the lawyer was gone I overheard your soliloquy covering what you are now contemplating doing. That is how it was."

"Oh!" exclaimed Crane, his queer yellow eyes snapping. "Now you leave this room!" exclaimed Ruric, pointing at the door.

"If I force the issue the little beggar may create a row," thought Ruric. "I can just as well do it some other time. In fact, I'll get that vial from my wife and murder him with some of its contents in his food. Then it will be easy to give him this stuff afterward."

Without a word to Ruric, and unsuspecting that his wife and Marie were plotting his downfall, he unlocked the door and left the boy's bedroom.

Ruric uttered a sigh of relief when he was gone. "A good riddance! I just awakened in time," thought he, "I'm safe for the rest of the night I'll retire again." This suggestion he went to bed and slept undisturbed until the following morning, when his mother summoned him to her room and gave him a note to deliver.

"Why—it is for my father!" he commented. "Yes. You will find him at the D—— Hotel, Ruric." "Have you determined upon anything?" "I have—you shall discover what it is later on." Ruric then told his mother what happened the previous night.

"I am in constant danger now," he added, "for if I remain under this roof much longer the doctor will make another effort to get me in trouble."

"Do not fear, my boy, he shall not injure you." Marie then left the asylum with the note.

Proceeding to Irvingdale, he went to the hotel and asked for Godfrey Gruesome.

His father was quartered in room No. 5, and the boy was ushered upstairs and admitted.

"Why, Ruric, what brings you here?" was his father's first query.

"My mother sent you this note," said the boy. With eager, trembling hands, the man took the note, opened the envelope, and read the missive.

A look of intense satisfaction overspread his face. "At last. At last!" he exclaimed.

"What is it, father?" "She wants me to call at the asylum this afternoon at three. This fatal mystery will then be ended."

"Heaven!" fervently exclaimed the boy. "I am maddened as he had been by the strange and perplexing events happening since he left school, it was with a feeling of relief that he heard this agreeable news from his father."

The mystery of the madhouse was to be explained. He left his father after giving him an account of all that had happened since Godfrey Gruesome made his escape from the asylum to his wife's bedroom.

Returning to the asylum, he told his mother what his father had said, and saw the doctor drive away in his buggy.

Marie came in with her bonnet and shawl on while the boy was conversing with his mother, and the lady said:

"Well, Marie, have you been to New York?" "Yes, madam," replied the woman, sitting down.

"Did you get the vial the doctor gave me to the lawyer?" "Yes, madam, an' 'e say zat 'e 'ave ze contents analysed, to prove vot eet do."

"Will he be here?" "Yes, Mr. Bings, he come for sure."

"Did you see Mr. Crane's lawyer?" "Yes, madam, Mr. Bings ees ver' mooch disgust zat ze doctor is a bad mans."

"What a surprise this will be for Mr. Crane!" "Yes, madam, but safe enough for me?"

"I am sure of it, Marie."

"I am sure of it, Marie."

"I am sure of it, Marie."

"I am sure of it, Marie."

"I am sure of it, Marie."

"I am sure of it, Marie."

"I am sure of it, Marie."

"I am sure of it, Marie."

"I am sure of it, Marie."

"I am sure of it, Marie."

"I am sure of it, Marie."

lous man, you know he would hesitate at nothing to secure his own safety."

"True, madam, true," assented the girl. "Eet eez bettair zat I stick to you, an' sen' heem to ze jails."

"You gave the lawyer your shorthand book?" "I deed; an' eet eez all translate by zees time."

"Then no better proof can be produced. You have a detailed record of all Crane's villainy from beginning to end in it, and nothing more conclusive could be produced."

"Besides, madam," added Marie, "ze attorney meek zat I swear to ze evidence, vile I am cen hees office."

The lady smiled and nodded. "Good! And now I am ready!" she exclaimed.

Ruric left the room and went out in the yard. "Such a series of events have followed my return from school!" he mused. "I never heard of anything like it before! Haunted by the image of my own mother—a helpless witness of a singular train of occurrences which I cannot understand, it is a wonder I am not crazy myself—maddened by all that has happened."

He saw the doctor returning, a few moments later, and not wishing to meet the yellow-eyed little rascal, he turned to enter the building when he saw a man dash at the doctor's buggy out in the road.

It was his father, and the moment Crane saw him he sprang out of the vehicle, leaving the driver in the seat, ran toward the asylum, and just as Ruric hurried in the main entrance the doctor followed, leaving the door standing wide open.

In ran the furious Godfrey Gruesome after him, the doctor slammed the door shut, and then, turning upon the returned sailor, he hissed, in sibilant tones:

"You have run into a trap, Godfrey Gruesome, for you will never leave this asylum again alive!"

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

Ruric had drawn aside from the two men, and stood at the foot of the staircase, and as the doctor finished speaking Crane raised a whistle to his lips and blew a shrill blast.

It was a signal summoning the keepers.

"Father! Run for your life!" shouted the boy.

"Stand where you are!" roared Caleb Crane.

"No! You shall not murder me!" gasped Mr. Gruesome.

"This way—follow me!" cried Ruric.

There sounded the hurried patter of approaching footsteps, as the keepers came running through the hall.

Godfrey Gruesome saw Ruric dash up the stairs, beckoning to him, and the man hastened after him.

The moment Gruesome reached the upper hall he saw Ruric standing in front of his mother's room door, beckoning to him.

The door was thrown open the next moment, and the lady appeared upon the threshold.

"Ruric, what is the matter?" she cried upon beholding the boy.

"My father!" he panted, pointing at the man.

"Julia!" interpose Gruesome.

"Oh, Godfrey—my husband."

"I could not wait until three o'clock to come here—"

"Ah! What are those voices—those footsteps approaching—"

"The doctor and the keepers!" cried Ruric.

"They are pursuing me!" panted Gruesome.

"Come in here, then—quick!"

Just then Crane and the keepers appeared at the head of the stairs.

"Hold on! Don't let that man in your room!" Crane roared.

The two keepers made a dash at Gruesome.

But ere they had taken two steps, the lady caught hold of him, pulled him into the room, and as Ruric glided in after him the door was slammed shut in the enraged keepers' faces with a bang, the key was turned, the bolt shot into the socket, and they were barred out.

Bang! went Crane's fist against the panels.

"Open the door, or, by Jove, I'll burst it in!" he shouted. Godfrey Gruesome put his back against it.

"What shall I do?" he panted.

"Why didn't you stay away until I told you to come?" whispered his wife. "You may ruin my plans."

"I couldn't! I couldn't!" replied Gruesome.

"They may make a prisoner of you now."

"No! See, I am armed."

He drew a revolver from his pocket.

"No bloodshed here," muttered his wife.

"Not unless they drive me to it!" he replied, grimly.

But not time to think, for in the hall opened and the door swung open. No. 4 bounded into the room. The doctor was the first to recover from his surprise.

"What a noise! What a commotion!" he cried.

"Monster!" shrieked the crazy-looking creature, "you have gone back on me. But, thank heaven, I found a secret passage leading from that cell, and have managed to get out. Is this the way you treat me after all I have done for you? Is it?"

There was a dark look upon her face, and Ruric and his father now had ample opportunity of seeing what an exact image she was of the woman who figured as the doctor's wife.

Not only did she look like Mrs. Gruesome, but her voice and every gesture were exactly the same.

"Fool!" commenced the doctor.

"Caleb Crane," interposed Ruric's mother.

"Ah! you—"

"Do not deceive yourself any longer."

"What about?"

"About this woman and I."

"How do you mean, you traitress?"

"I am not your wife!"

"Not my wife?"

"No! I am Julia Gruesome—"

"Gruesome?"

"This woman is your real wife—"

"My wife?"

"She is Laura—my twin sister!"

"Great heaven!"

Here in concealment so that you could cheat me and my son out of the fortune left us by James Forrester—my father! I am not a fool!"

Godfrey Gruesome could only clutch Ruric's arm, and with a look as if he doubted the evidence of his senses stare from his wife to her sister and then at Crane.

The moment the disclosure came, so intent were they all on what was transpiring, they did not notice that the porter had admitted two men to the building and that they now stood in the doorway.

They were both men, and both were interested as the other spectators.

One was Benjamin H. Bings, and the other a stranger. "To continue the deception," went on Mrs. Gruesome, in a low voice, "the doctor was ordered to her room at the Langdale church, people imagining she was me. I was confined in the dungeon cell, a raving maniac, I was helpless to undo the deception—"

With which Caleb Crane hired Marie Montmedy to do me. Confined in the dungeon cell, a raving maniac, I was helpless to undo the deception—"

When Dan—my father—at the cottage—declared his belief in the doctor's story, and I did not recognize him," said Ruric.

"Exposed! All! Everything!" groaned the doctor.

"I was deceived," said Ruric.

"A word from me, if you please," interrupted Laura Crane. "Say what you will," said Ruric's mother, bitterly. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself for your complicity in this work."

"I am," said the woman, sadly. "I have been a wicked woman, and I am now heartily sorry for the part I took in the plot. I have been amply punished. But it was my wicked husband who induced me to do what I did."

"Fool! Fool! Shut up!" yelled Crane, glaring at her angrily.

"I was forced into it. Julia—my sister—has been deceived. I am very, very repentant."

"I am very, very repentant," said Ruric's mother, with a look of intense supplication, and tears streaming from her eyes.

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the game yet. We have got the three of them cowed up in this house, by Jove, and I will call every one in the establishment to help me hold them here. I will not accept defeat. I am not yet killed. Once I make prisoner of them I will finish this game, and—win!"

He sprang toward the door as he spoke, but the doctor and accompanying Mr. Bings caught hold of him by the arm.

"Caleb Crane, you are my prisoner, in the name of the law!" he exclaimed, showing the startled doctor a determined look.

"Your prisoner?" stammered Crane, turning very pale.

"This lawyer has made the charge against you, in the name of Mrs. Gruesome. We just overheard all that passed!"

Crushed at his defeat, Crane uttered a dismal groan.

"I am lost!" he gasped. "I throw up the sponge."

"And it is about time!" said the officer, as he snapped a pair of handcuffs on the man. "And as these two keepers are accomplices of yours, I'll haul them in, too!"

He soon had his three prisoners bunched.

"As hereinafter will appear," announced Mr. Bings, as he advanced into the room, "I discovered from Mrs. Gruesome's lawyer what an immense fraud has been going on, and with true judicial discretion have I secured this officer to arrest the guilty parties. It is true I arrived much earlier than aforesaid I would; still my call was very opportune. I have only to add that the fortune in question is ready for payment to the legal heirs; namely, to Mrs. Godfrey Gruesome, two-thirds, to her son Ruric, one-third, and a fifth to myself for my work. As the Latin has it, sub colore juris, or, in other words, under color of law, despite this vile plot, the proper parties shall receive their just dues! But how about the wife of the perfidious accused?"

"She has made ample amends," said the lawyer.

"Good! I am glad of it," said the lawyer, with a nod, "and at the same time I will have the doctor and his wife appear at court to-morrow to give evidence against Caleb Crane. With her shorthand book, too, mind you, for that diary contains the sure conviction of this doctor. I will now bid you adieu!"

"Be merciful!" pleaded Crane, looking back.

"No! We will convict you!" said Godfrey Gruesome.

The detective then went away with his prisoners.

Crane good-by, and knowing that the doctor would leave her enough for her subsistence, they went away.

Taking up their quarters at an hotel, there they remained until they came in receipt of the fortune which had caused so much unhappiness, strife and intrigue.

Crane, Bings, and the doctor, with the doctor's wife, the drug and the French woman's shorthand book, added to the evidence of all the parties interested sending them to jail.

Marie was paid by Mrs. Gruesome and went away to France.

The wife of the perfidious madhouse keeper disappeared from the scene soon after, and the doctor and his wife went to New York to take up their residence with Ruric, to escape the scene of their past misery.

And so we must leave them—the innocent and just enjoying the benefits of their fortitude and courage—the wicked and designing reaping the whirlwind of their iniquity at last.

Next week's issue will contain "NAT O' THE NIGHT: OR, THE BRAVEST IN THE REVOLUTION." By Gen'l Jas. A. Gordon.

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A DEADLY BEDFELLOW.

By Col. Ralph Fenton.

One day a boy came running into our camp in a state of terrible excitement.

He said he had just seen two enormous snakes among the mimosas at the foot of the hill.

Harry and I seized some clubs and went out to the place designated, and while we were hunting the rest of our party joined us.

One of the dogs had got loose and followed us out.

He sprung forward with a leap; but when he found what kind of game it was, he evidently meant to haul off.

He had got a little too near, however, for his safety, for before he could draw off a serpent sprung and bit him.

The poor brute shrunk away with a sharp cry, and almost instantly went into convulsions, and in less than five minutes he was dead.

In a little while we despatched the venomous monster and cut off his head; and for several hours thereafter the green poison continued to ooze, in small drops, from the sharp fangs.

The snake was called by the natives the picakholu, and pronounced, without any exception, the most venomous of all the serpent tribe.

So copious is its poison that six strong oxen have been known to die from its bites at a single attack.

The first animal bitten died almost instantly, the second died in a very few minutes, the third lived half an hour, while the others lingered longer.

The snake we had slain measured nine feet and two inches in length, and was six inches in diameter at the largest part of the body.

The color of the back was a dark, dirty brown, changing to a yellowish tinge upon the belly.

I might have preserved the skin; but after the exhibition I had witnessed of the terrible power of the poison which issued from those fangs, I am willing to confess that I had no desire to take the head into my hands. We returned to our camp.

We looked over the camp to see that all was safe and right, and then retired.

I was just closing my eyes and composing myself for sleep, when I fancied that I heard something moving close by me.

Was it Harry?

I spoke to him, but found him fast asleep.

I listened awhile, and hearing nothing more, I lay down again.

I had slept, how long I knew not, when I was aroused by a cold touch upon my forehead.

I started up and placed my hand upon my brow.

It was so dark that I could see nothing, save the opening at the entrance of the hut.

I spoke to Harry again, but he did not answer me.

He was sleeping soundly as ever.

It must have been a dream, I thought.

The cold touch upon my forehead must have been all fancy.

I had no remembrance of what I had dreamed; there was a cold sweat upon my brow, and my heart was oppressed as though by an incubus.

I remained awhile in a sitting posture, and then lay down again.

Again I slept, but not soundly.

A horrible dream came to trouble me.

I dreamed that I was in the deep forest all alone, without my horse, and without weapons of any kind.

How I came there I knew not.

I was weak and faint, as though I had been very sick, and as I sat up and looked around I found that a flood of waters was arising upon all hands.

There was no current—no rushing of the water; but silent and darkly it arose, until the place of my rest had become an island.

Then the island grew smaller and smaller as the deep, black water, arose, until the flood almost touched my feet.

Then there came up from the inky depths a score of huge serpents, with their heads all pointing toward me.

They were picakholus!

Their white fangs had a murderous gleam, and I could see the deadly poison distilling therefrom.

One of them crawled up and rested his head upon my knees.

I cried out in terror, and awoke.

My cry startled Harry from his sleep, and he asked me what was the matter.

As soon as I could collect my scattered senses I answered him.

I told him that the snake we had killed had filled my sleep with horrible dreams.

He laughed and lay down again, and pretty soon I followed his example, and once more I slept.

When I was next aroused it was not by a dream.

I distinctly felt something moving upon my legs—a cold, oppressive weight, which thrilled me with an electric force.

During the latter part of the night I had been sleeping in a half-sitting posture, the end of my mattress being folded under my pillow, so that, as I awoke, I was able to look around without lifting my head.

Daylight was in the hut, and Harry's bed was empty.

He had arisen and gone out.

Perhaps he had stepped upon me as he passed.

No, the weight was still upon me.

"Oh, heaven!"

The words broke from my lips in a shrieking whisper, and for a moment I was utterly paralyzed.

Upon the blanket, and resting directly over my legs, lay a monstrous picakholu.

He was in a coil, and his head was erect, reaching up half a yard, and swaying to and fro with a slightly undulating motion.

His eyes were like two globes of fire, and ever and anon he darted out his forked tongue as he caught the gleam of my eye.

I at once comprehended that this must be the mate to the serpent we had slain on the previous day.

This monster had tracked his companion to our camp, and had found shelter in my hut.

RAPID CIGARETTE MAKER.

This little article should be in the pocket of every smoker. With it a perfect cigarette can be made in ten seconds. You will find them equal in appearance and far superior in quality to commercial ones, at less than a quarter of the cost. With our cigarette maker in your possession, you can smoke a pipe or cigarette at pleasure, as it's just as easy to roll a cigarette as to fill a pipe. Every part of the cigarette maker is handsomely nickel-plated. Price, 15c., or 3 for 40c. by mail, postpaid.

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ITCH POWDER.

Geewhiz! What fun you can have with this stuff. Moisten the tip of your finger, tap it on the contents of the box, and a little bit will stick. Then shake hands with your friend, or drop a speck down his back. In a minute he will feel as if he had the seven years' itch. It will make him scratch, roar, squirm and make faces. But it is perfectly harmless, as it is made from the seeds of wild roses. The horrible itch stops in a few minutes, or can be checked immediately by rubbing the spot with a wet cloth. While it is working, you will be apt to laugh your suspender buttons off. The best joke of all. Price 10 cents a box, by mail, postpaid.

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"RUBBER-NECK" PHONOGRAPH.

The "Rubber-Neck" Phonograph consists of a little red paste-board box, to the inside of which is attached a celluloid strip bearing the record. A little key is held in the left hand and drawn quickly over the celluloid strip. The result is surprising. Just as plain and clear as the human voice comes forth the words "rubber-neck."

Price, 10c. each by mail postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 215 Walworth St., B'klyn., N. Y.

ANARCHIST BOMBS.

They are small glass vials, and contain a liquid chemical that produces a horrible odor. When dropped in a room, they will make every person present rush out, holding their noses. In a few minutes the smell will disappear. Perfectly harmless. No danger of any evil effect. The only risk is that your friends may make you smell one of the bombs you. If, if they catch you. Price, 10c. a box, or 3 for 25c., by mail, postpaid.

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GOOD LUCK BANKS.

Ornamental as well as useful. Made of highly nickel-plated brass. It holds just One Dollar. When filled it opens itself. Remains locked until refilled. Can be used as a watch-charm. Money refunded if not satisfied. Price, 10c. by mail.

L. SENARENS, 347 Winthrop St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

CACHOO OR SNEEZING POWDER.

The greatest fun-maker of them all. A small amount of this powder, when blown in a room, will cause everyone to sneeze without anyone knowing where it comes from. It is very light, will float in the air for some time, and penetrate every nook and corner of a room. It is perfectly harmless. Cachoo is put up in bottles, and one bottle contains enough to be used from 10 to 25 times. Price, by mail, 10c. each; 3 for 25c.

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The newest and most novel puzzle on the market. It consists of a flat piece of wood 1 1/2 x 3 inches, neatly covered with imitation leather. The cross-bar and ring in the hole are nickel-plated. The object is to get the small ring off the bar. It absolutely cannot be done by anyone not in the secret. More fun to be had with it than with any other puzzle made. It is not breakable and can be carried in the vest pocket.

Price 10 cents each by mail, post-paid

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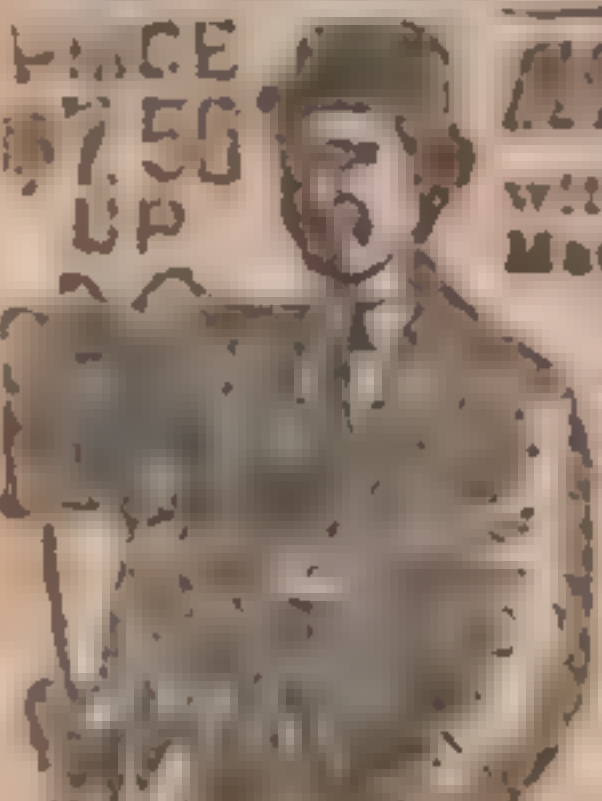
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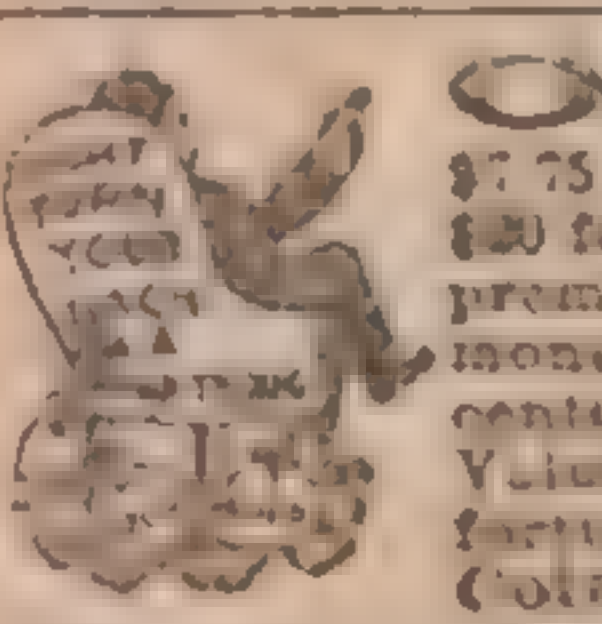
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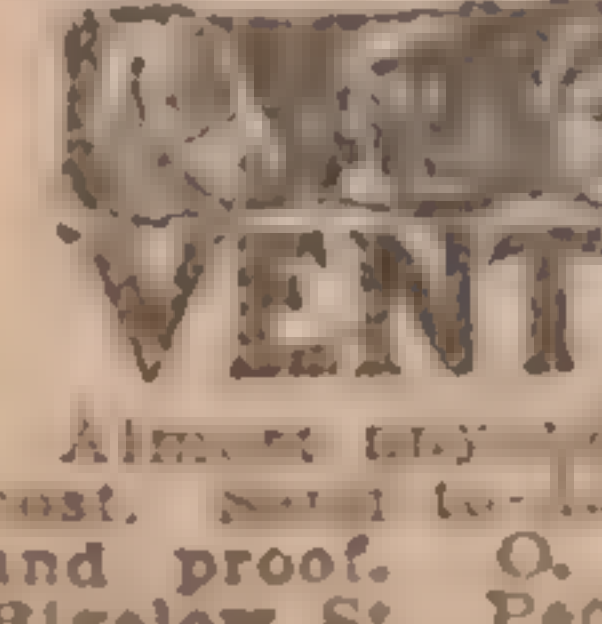
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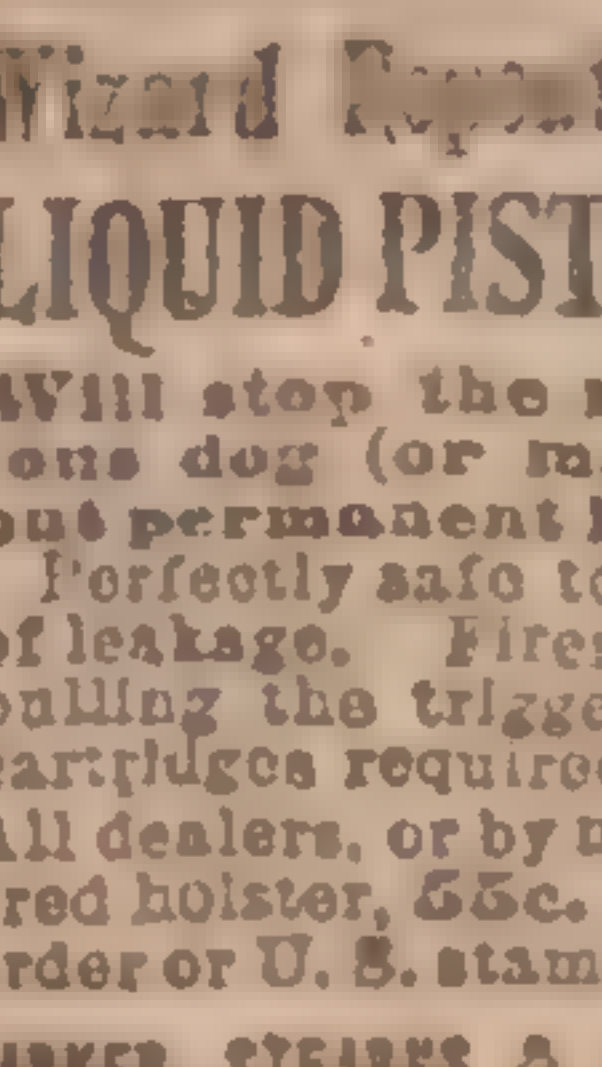
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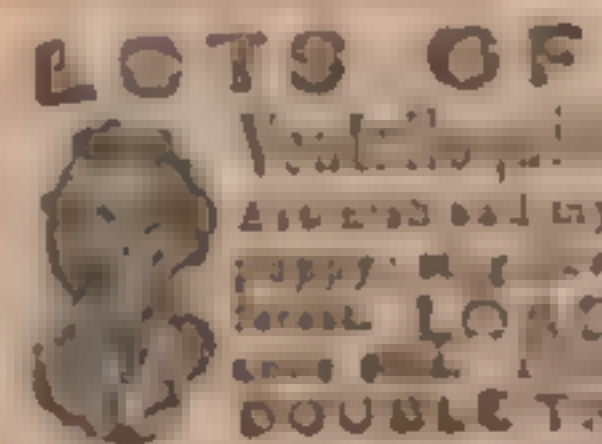
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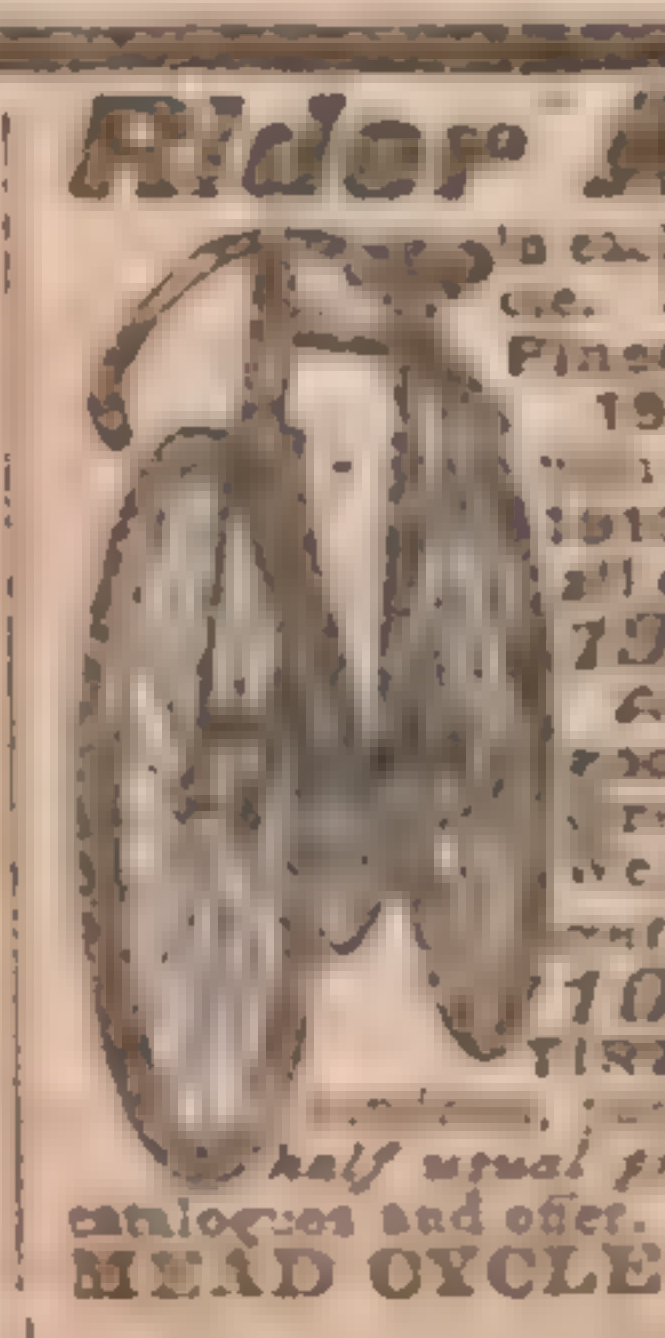
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Tells how to make Engines, Cameras, Microscopes, Telescopes, Lanterns, Boats, Yachts, Balloons, Fishing Tackle, Animal Toys and many other Mechanical Toys that a Boy can easily make. 200 illustrations, size of book is 6x7. This great book with a LOT of VERY interesting circulars sent for only 10 cents.

G. F. Clarke & Co., Box 504, Le Roy, N. Y.

THE MAGIC WALLET



Lots of fun can be had with it puzzling people, while being used in a practical way to carry bank bills, letters, invoices, etc. Open with the straight bands on the left, lay a bill on top of bands, close wallet; open to the left and the bill will be found under the crossed bands. Close wallet, open to the right and the bill will be found under straight bands. How did it get there? That's the question. Price 12 cts. each, postpaid.

J. KENNEDY, 303 West 17th St., N. Y.

DETL



Also known as a Japanese butterfly. A small envelope that is an envelope. When the envelope is opened the flap will fly out through the air for several yards. Made of colored paper to represent a butterfly. Price, 10c.

M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.

VANISHING CIGAR.



This cigar is made in exact imitation of a good one. It is held by a rubber cord which, with the attached safety pin, is fastened on the inside of the sleeve. When offered to a friend, as it is about to be taken, it will instantly disappear.

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JAPANESE TWIRLER.



A wonderful imported paper twirler. By a simple manipulation of the wooden handles a number of beautiful figures can be produced. It takes on several combinations of magnificent colors. Price, 10c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

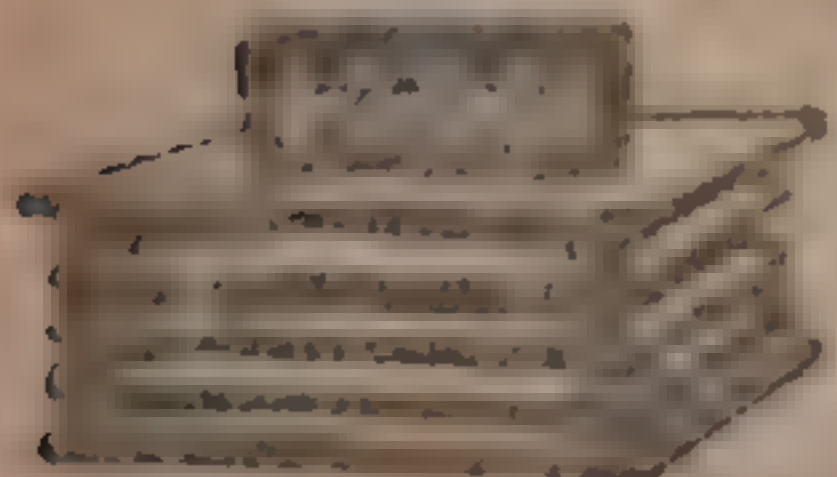
SPRING TOPS



Something new for the boys. A top you can spin without a string. This is a decided novelty. It is of large size, made of brass, and has a heavy balance rim. The shank contains a powerful spring. The top of the spring has a milled edge for winding it up. When wound, you merely lift the outer casing, and the top spins at such a rapid speed that the balance rim keeps it going a long time. Without doubt the handsomest and best top on the market.

Price 12 cents each, by mail, post-paid. H. F. LANG, 215 Walworth St., B'klyn., N. Y.

LITTLE ACCORDEONS



The smallest, cheapest, and best sounding musical instrument for the price. This perfect little accordion has four keys and eight notes, a complete scale, upon which you can play all the popular tunes. It is made of brass and is very durable. It produces sweet music and perfect tone. Anyone can learn to play it without any practice.

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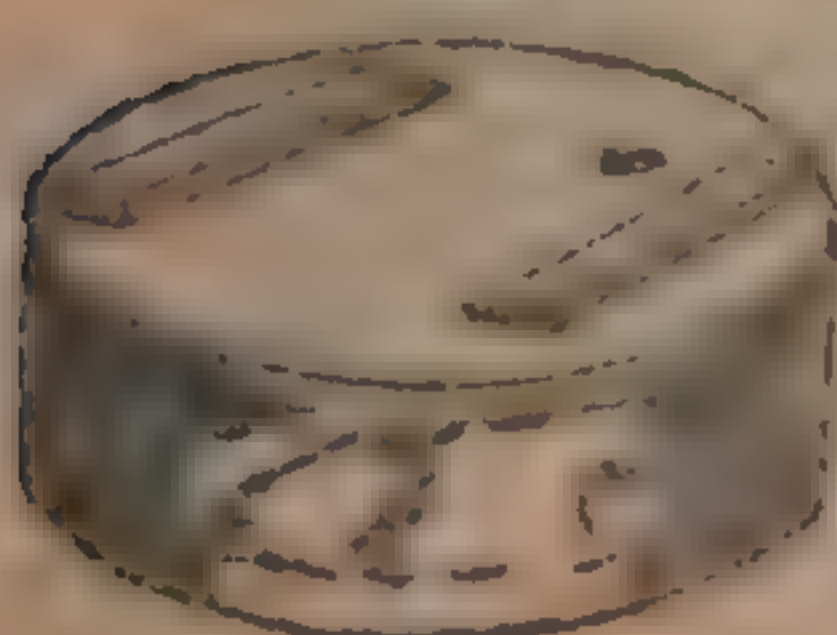
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The most mystifying trick ever done by a magician. The performer shows a plain light table. He places his hand flat upon its top. The table clings to his hand as if glued there. He may swing it up, or let the table will not leave his hand. He sets it on the floor again. The table clings to his hand as if glued there. The performer shows a plain light table. He places his hand flat upon its top. The table clings to his hand as if glued there. He may swing it up, or let the table will not leave his hand. He sets it on the floor again. The table clings to his hand as if glued there.

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BUCKLE UP



Just like a circus. One of these. All you have to do is to place it on a chair seat. When under a cushion, if possible. Then your friend to sit down. An unearthly sound drum will send your friend to the ground. The most puzzling and amusing trick ever. Perfectly harmless and safe. Price 10 cents each, by mail, post-paid.

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The most popular of the Romanatone. It is a nickel plated, finely polished, each put up in a box with full instruction how to use them. Price, 18c., postpaid.

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LITTLE CHECKER BOARDS.



Price 7 cents each by mail. They are made of durable colored cardboard, fold to the size of 6 1/2 x 3 1/2 inches, and are so handy in size that they can be carried in the pocket. They contain 24 red and black checkers, and are just as serviceable as the most expensive board. The box and lid can be fastened together in a moment by means of patent joints in the ends. Full directions printed on each box.

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DOUBLE CLAPPERS



They are handsomely made of white wood, 6 inches long, with carefully rounded edges. On each side a steel spring is secured, with flat leaden discs at the ends. They produce a tremendous clatter, and yet they can be played even better than the most expensive bones used by minstrels. The finest article of its kind on the market. Price 7 cents a pair, postpaid.

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THE BOO-BOO CARD



Here is an innocent, and very laughable practical joke. It consists of a card, postal size, blackened on one side, except a white circle in the center. On the other side is an interesting sentence, printed in spiral form, so that one has to keep turning it around and around in order to read it.

Price 10 cents each by mail, postpaid. J. KENNEDY, 303 W. 127th St., N. Y.

LIGHTNING TRICK BOX.



A startling and pleasing illusion! "The ways of the world are devious," says Matthew Arnold, but the ways of the Lightning Trick Box when properly handled are admitted to be puzzling and uncertain. You take off the lid and show your friends that it is full of nice candy. Replace the lid, when you can solemnly assure

your friends that you can instantly empty the box in their presence without opening it; and taking off the lid again, sure enough the candy has disappeared. Or you can change the candy into a piece of money by following the directions sent with each box. This is the neatest and best cheap trick ever invented.

Price, only 10c.; 3 for 25c., mailed, postpaid. M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.

CARTER AEROPLANE No. 1.



Will fly on a horizontal line 150 feet! Can be flown in the house, and will not injure itself nor anything in the room. The most perfect little aeroplanes made. The motive power is furnished by twisted rubber bands contained within the tubular body of the machine. It is actuated by a propeller at each end revolving in opposite directions. Variation in height may be obtained by moving the planes and the balance weight. It can be made to fly either to the right or the left by moving the balance sideways before it is released for flight. Price, 35c. each, delivered.

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In each set there are ten pins and two bowling balls, packed in a beautifully ornamented box. With one of the miniature sets you can play ten-pins on your dining-room table just as well as the game can be played in a regular alley. Every game known to professional bowlers can be worked with these pins. Price, 10c. per box by mail, postpaid.

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FIGHTERS.



A brand new idea for amusement. They consist of small cardboard figures of soldiers, Indians, swordsmen, etc., and are mounted on wires. The moment you twist the wires between the little figures, they instantly become animated, and charge at each other in the most astonishing manner. No end of fun with these toys. Price, 5c. by mail, postpaid.

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THE FLUTTER-BY.



This mechanical flying machine is worked by a new principle. It looks like a beautiful butterfly, about 9 inches wide. In action its wing movements are exactly like those of a live butterfly. It will travel through the air about 25 feet, in the most natural manner. As flying toys are all the rage, this one should be a source of profit and amusement to both old and young. Price, 19c. each by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 215 Walworth St., B'klyn., N. Y.

BUBBLE BLOWER.



With this device, a continuous series of bubbles can be blown. It is a wooden, cigar-shaped blower, enclosing a small vial, in which there is a piece of soap. The vial is filled with water, and a peculiarly perforated cork is inserted. When you blow in to the mouthpiece, it sets up a hydraulic pressure through the cork perforations and causes a bubble after bubble to come out. No need of dipping into water once the little bottle is filled. Price, 16c. each by mail, postpaid.

J. KENNEDY, 303 W. 127th St., N. Y.

HALF MASKS.



False-faces beaten a mile! There are 7 in a set and represent an Indian, a Japanese girl, a clown, Foxy Grandpa, an English Johnny Atkins and an Automobillist. Beautifully lithographed in handsome colors on a durable quality of cardboard. They have eye-holes and string perforations. Price, 6c. each, or the full set of 7 for 25c., postpaid.

M. O'NEILL, 425 W. 56th St., N. Y.

THE NEW FROG JOKER.



Bushels of fun! "Froggy" has got a very croaking and rasping voice, and when held in the hollow of the hand and made to croak, one instinctively looks around for a bullfrog. An amusing joke can be played on your friends by passing the ratchet-wheel of the frog down their coat-sleeve or the back of their coat. The ripping, tearing noise gives them a severe shock, and they heave a sigh of relief when they find that their clothes are sound and whole as before. A good joke is to make a gentleman's or lady's watch stem-winder. With the frog concealed in your hand, you take the stem of the watch between your thumb and finger, and at the same time allow the ball of your thumb to pass over the ratchet-wheel of the frog, when to the company you will seem to be winding the watch, but the noise will startle them, for it will sound more like a frog croaking than a watch stem-winder.

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An innovation in Boston school work has been planned in the establishment of classes for stammerers in the Julia Ward Howe school, Roxbury, to begin Monday morning, April 18. The sessions will be from 10 to 12 o'clock in the afternoon. The classes will be held on each school day for the following two weeks.

A party of tourists which recently travelled over the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada continuously for five days was served during that time, on the dining-cars, with 30 meals daily or 3,300 meals in all. This was done on standard dining-cars, each having a seating capacity of 30 persons and managed by one conductor, four cooks and five waiters. At this rate each waiter served at each meal an average of 22 persons, and each chair would be used an average of three and two-thirds times at each meal.

English delegates from the Wisconsin Methodist Episcopal conference will go to the general church conference at Minneapolis May 1. This conference will be made up of delegates from the Methodist churches all over the world. Matters of much importance will be discussed and acted upon at this meeting. Several revolutionary ideas will be introduced, among them one recommending the annulling of the rules against dancing and card playing. This measure has the support of the younger and progressive element in the conference.

It has long been noticed that prehistoric skulls have been found in a manner that was difficult to explain. At the Academy of Sciences in Paris a few days ago Marcel Griaud gave what seems a rational explanation. The speaker said he had sought out what animals had teeth like those in this peculiar manner. The only cue he could get was the pig. Now, our ancestors must have eaten roots as well as the flesh of animals and they doubtless were very particular about washing them, so the earth was the only ground where their remains could be found. The pig. M. Griaud also suggested that these primeval people were not only very particular about washing their food but also about devouring earth habitually.

A very interesting and remarkable discovery of illuminated manuscripts and early printed books, ranging as far back as 1480, has just been made in the library at Oxton Hall, England. It came about in this way. The vicar of the parish, the Rev. W. Laycock, obtained permission to go through the books in the library at his leisure. While so doing his curiosity was aroused by a locked and forgotten cupboard therein, which he proceeded to investigate. Its contents proved to be between forty and fifty volumes, which confirmed the impression conveyed by the antiquity of their appearance that they belonged to the very earliest stage of the art of printing, which was introduced into this country in 1474. The majority of them are folio volumes, and with one exception they are all in their original bindings. The covers are carefully planed boards of solid oak, and the books are bound with stout leather laces, the backing and lining being fragments of illuminated manuscripts of a much earlier date, cut up as waste with a ruthless indifference.

"Is fishing good at this resort?" "Sure, one of the girls catches a sucker every day."

Willis—I wonder if there will ever be universal peace?
Gillis—Sure. All they've got to do is to get the nations to agree that in case of war the winner pays the pensions.

She—I'm afraid, Tom, dear, you will find me a mine of faults. He—Darling, it shall be the sweetest labor of my life to correct them. She (flaring up)—Indeed, you shan't.

"There's nothing slow about Jones." "I guess you never loaned him money." "Oh, yes, I have. I loaned him \$10 six months ago, and I haven't been able to catch him since."

Business man (explaining).—When they say "money is easy" they mean simply that the supply is greater than the demand. His Wife.—Goodness! I shouldn't think such a thing possible.

Citizen—What's up? Policeman—Oi'm knockin' fur help, an' ringin' fur an ambulance. Citizen—What's the matter? Policeman—Oi just saw two Oytalians smilin' at th' same woman.

Uncle Jackson (showing city boy the farm)—With all your city eddication, sonny, I'll warrant you don't know which side you milk the cow from? The Boy—Sure, I do! It's the under side!

"Maggie," said the mistress to the new girl, "don't you know better than to throw the slops out at the back door?"

"Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no," replied Maggie, "but I reckon as I knows me bizness. I ain't never worked for a fambly and had no more self-respect than t' throw 'em out at the front door, no' an."

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